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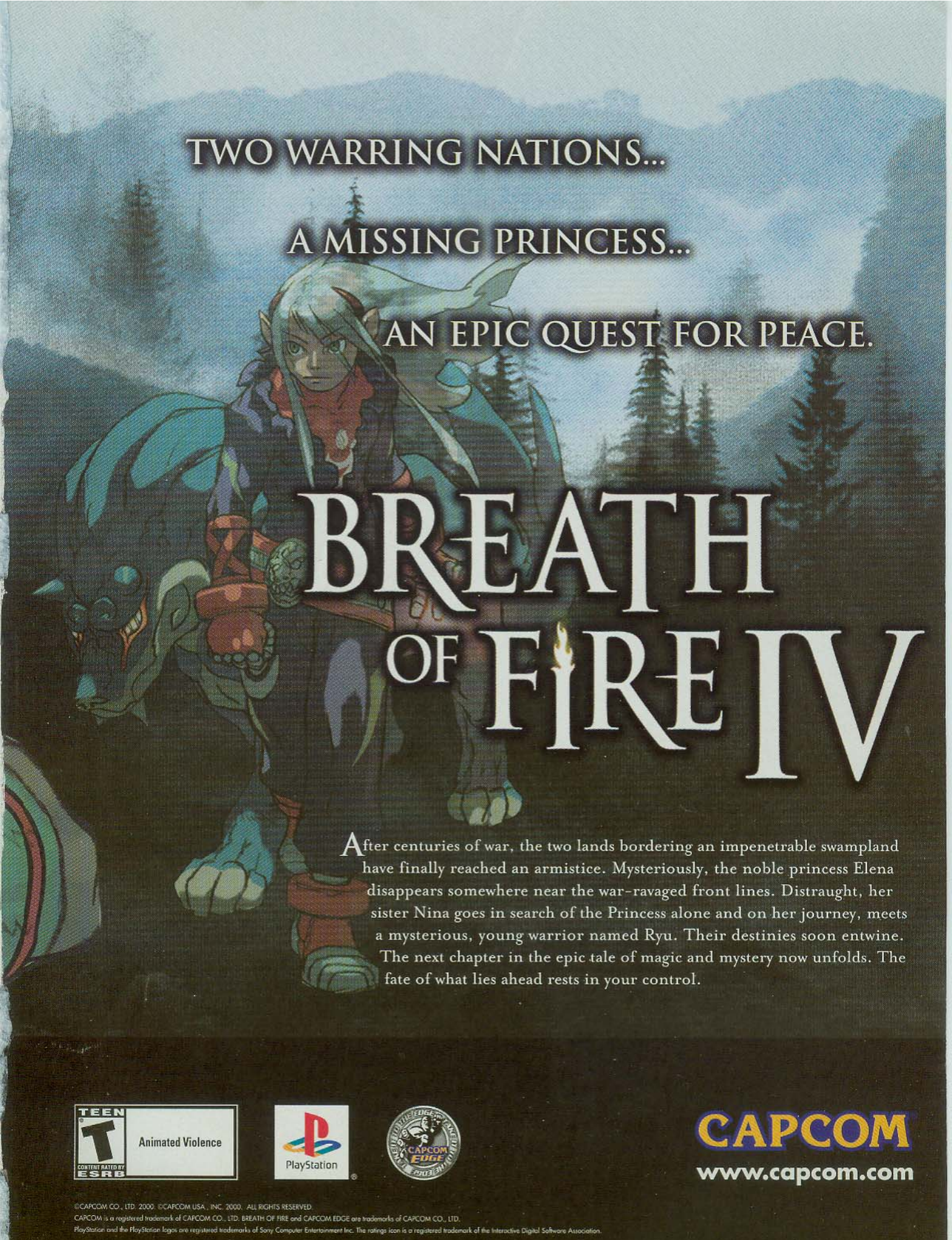

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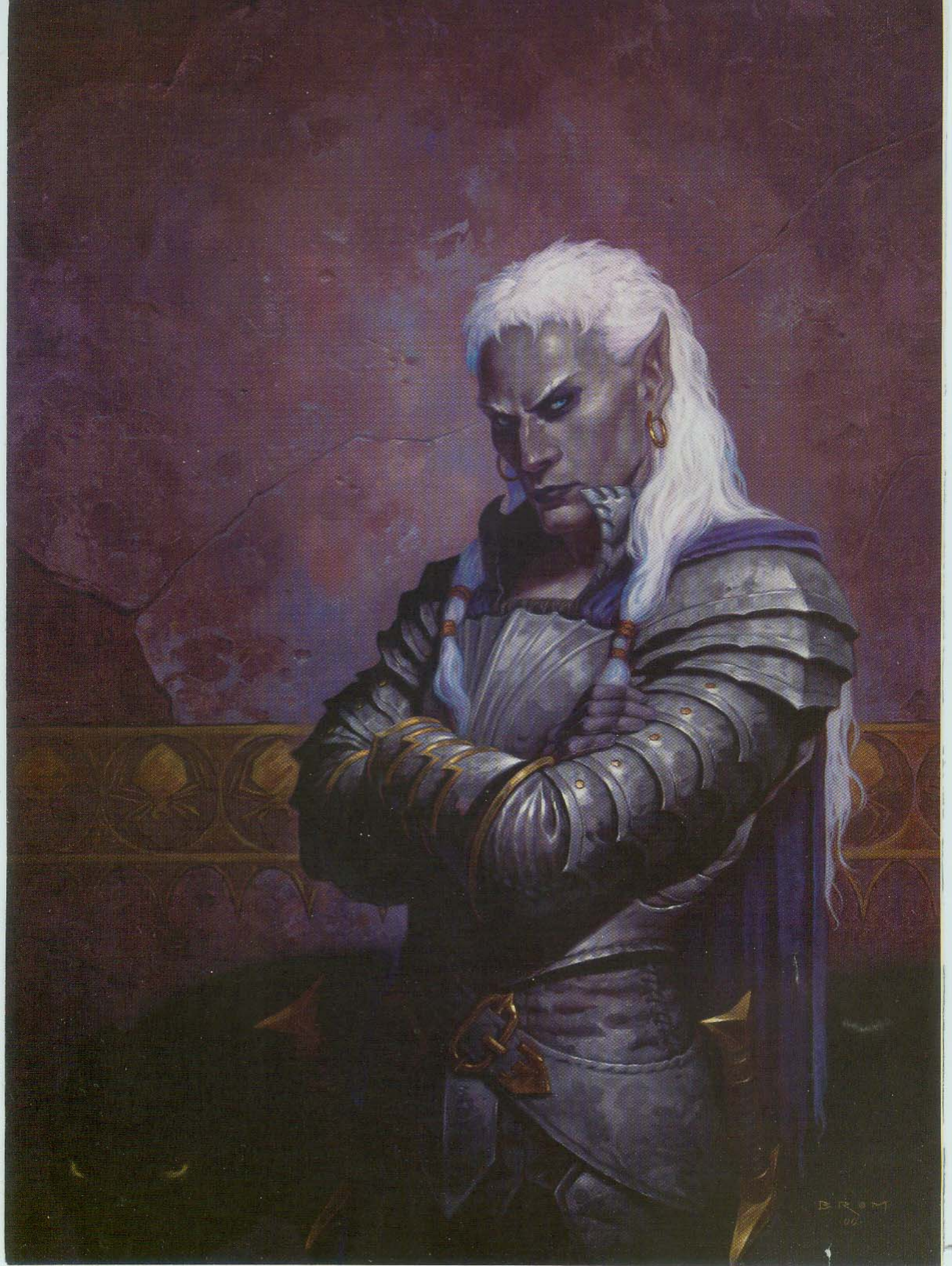
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DRAGON Issue 279
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January 2001

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I have always despised elves. In all of my campaigns they've been the comic relief, the namby-pambies, and the snobs. My players have avoided even talking about playing elves.

Until now.

After reading this issue and seeing this month's cover, I'm convinced that elves can be a viable part of my D&D games.

Brom captures this drow hero's confidence and attitude. With his twin blades and feline companion, seasoned FORGOTTEN REALMS players won't have a problem putting a name to the face.

—Peter Whitley, Art Director

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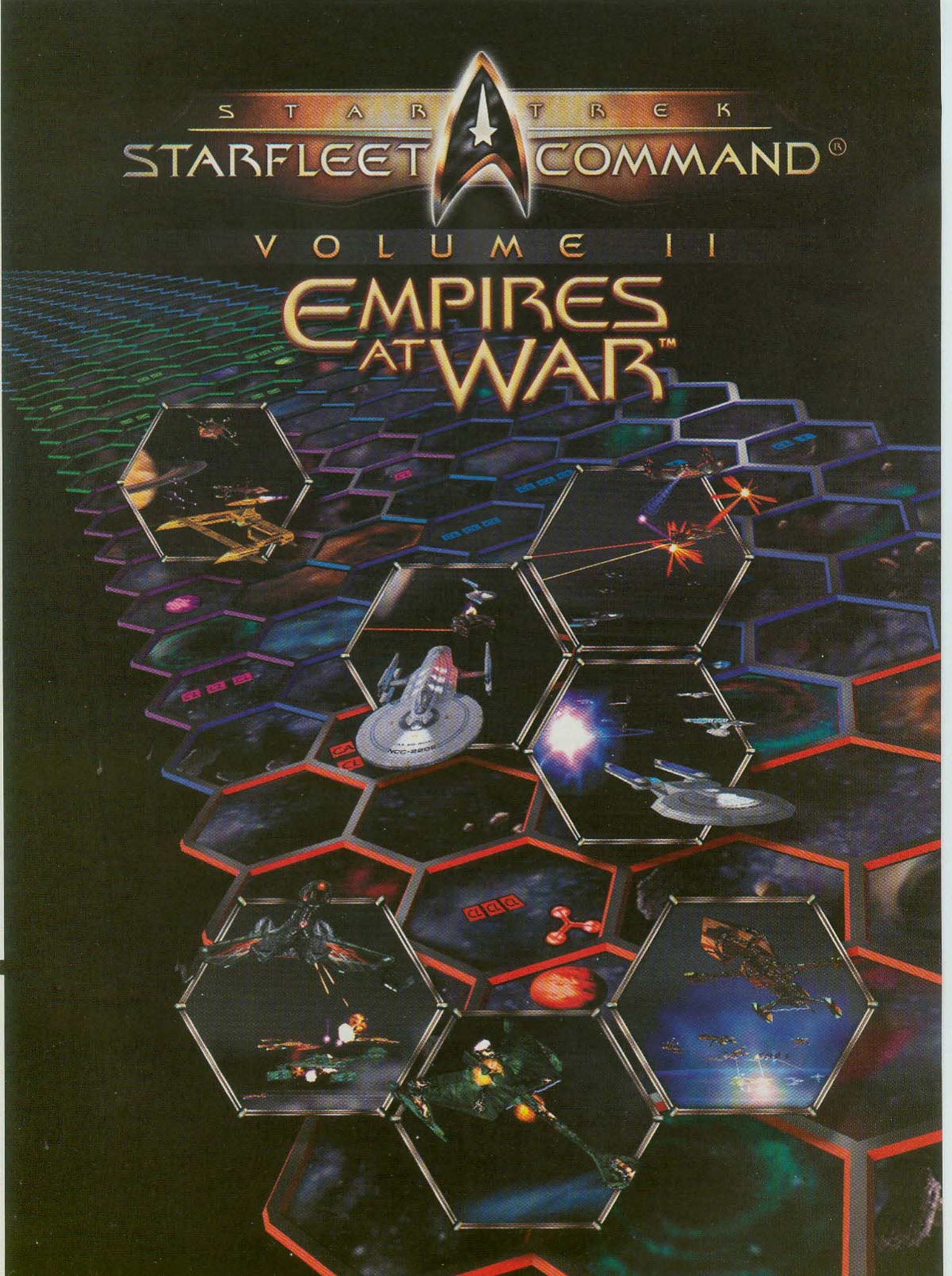
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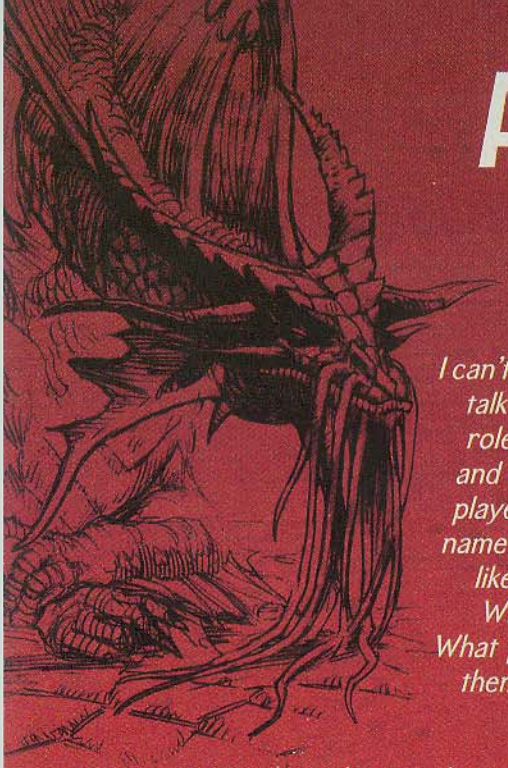


Age Before Beauty

I can't speak from much experience when talking about elves. In over a decade of roleplaying, I've played an elf just once, and that was a rather misguided effort: I played a drow with two scimitars, whose name when mispronounced sounded a lot like a popular brand of snack crackers. Why didn't I play more elf characters? What prejudice prevented me from trying them more than once? It's simple really: Elves are old.

Your average elven adventurer begins his career at the spry age of 110—and if you want to play an elf whose voice doesn't crack, you're looking at a character at least 120 years old. That's *really* old. If I were 120 years old, Billy the Kid could have been my baby sitter.

How do you pretend to be someone twice as old as my father but who looks younger than I do? How do you roleplay someone whose childhood lasted a hundred years? The stereotypical haughtiness of elves doesn't quite cut it.

I want to live a long and fruitful life, but even with the best luck and health, I can barely hope to grow as old as an adolescent elf. How do I play a character willing to risk his life for money by crawling into trap-filled monster holes when I know that, if that character would just eat right and exercise, he could live a thousand years? I would never live so dangerously, and I'm shooting to be a mere 125.

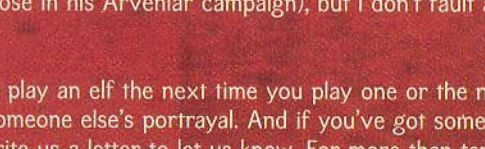
Come to think of it, how do you play a character whose grandparents have lived for 400 years? What's it like to call on that much knowledge and experience? How does it feel to recall the events of ancient history because *you were there*? What kind of society would characters with that perpetual memory produce?

I can envision meeting an elven child and seeing the eyes of a sixty-year-old staring back at me, but I find it hard to imagine how I should act with twice those years under my belt. I can imagine the feeling of meeting an elf and realizing the creature before me has outlived my great-grandparents, but I find it hard to grasp what it would be like to *be* that creature.

There's something wholly alien about elves. There's a mystery about them that has less to do with a connection to nature and magic than with the simple fact that elves live long lives. I've yet to meet a DM or player that portrays elves to my satisfaction (though Chris Perkins comes close in his Arveniar campaign), but I don't fault anyone for failing or failing to try.

Elves are hard.

Think about how hard it is to play an elf the next time you play one or the next time you're about to criticize someone else's portrayal. And if you've got some ideas about how to roleplay elves, write us a letter to let us know. For more than ten years I've been missing out on the elven experience. While to an elf that's just a drop in the bucket, for regular human me, it means it's time for a change.



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Not Compromised

So, we not only have a new edition of the game I love, but also a new look for the magazine to go with it. I had visions of a repeat of the New Coke fiasco, or the numerous attempts to revamp dying comics. I was especially puzzled by the reason for this change in appearance and tone—there was nothing wrong with the old magazine as far as I could see.

But, after a couple of issues, I am glad to see that the new layout hasn't compromised the content of the best magazine in the business. If anything, it seems that the quality of articles is steadily increasing, especially in the October issue, the one I look forward to the most each year (along with the April issue). In particular the new prestige class, the hunter of the dead, was downright funky. I am pleased to see that the articles seem to be dealing more with the game and improving game sessions than presenting a hoard of new magic items, spells, and such like each month. That said, I am always thrilled to see new monsters, especially when they are as impressive and interesting as the avolakia and the sheet phantom, which is going to provide one heck of an interesting Halloween game.

Speaking of monsters, the article on creature creation was probably the single most useful article of the past few issues, since I can now convert all those *Monstrous Compendium* annuals and appendices to the new edition.

"Dragonmirth" and "Nodwick" were great as always, though the loss of "Knights" is a blow.

Now that I've buttered you up, it's time to complain. I truly detest the new layout, especially since you've returned to the habit of splitting up articles across several pages—why do you do that? As for the color scheme, ye gods what were you thinking? Not only does it make the magazine harder to read, but it looks ugly!

Other than that, though, you're doing a bang-up job, so kudos to you, and here's to another twenty-five years!

Peter Whalley • Manchester, UK

As you can see in this and the past few issues, Art Director Peter Whitley has been paying attention to the feedback on the magazine's layout. He's changed some of the horizontal layout to vertical sidebars (as with "Profiles") but kept some of them horizontal for variety. What do you think of this issue's mix?

Mad About Ads

I have been a subscriber to your magazine for a modest three years now. In those thirty-nine issues I was always impressed by how you maintained a high article-to-advertisement ratio. Furthermore, the ads were ones that gamers would appreciate. I know that under our capitalist system you take the ads that pay the most. But never before have I encountered the crude and sickening images that I did in issue #276.

Page 91, for those who don't remember, depicted two men, both covered in each other's blood, one lying on the floor dead and another gloating over his corpse. It wasn't the graphic violence that perturbed me. It was the insinuation that this schmuck killed the other schmuck with his bare hands, fingernails, and probably teeth. As a Dungeon Master, I wouldn't allow my players to declare that they are biting their opponent's throat, (well, maybe Chris's half-orc with 8 Intelligence, but he's a half-orc) so why in our society, one far removed from the middle ages, should we dwell on such [expletive]?

I am neither a religious fanatic nor some doped-up hippie. Graphic violence doesn't phase me any more than the next guy, but this isn't necessary. Do enough of your readers actually listen to that type of music? Everyone I know that plays D&D doesn't listen to it. Those roleplayers I know who do favor such music tend to play White Wolf games rather than Wizards of the Coast ones.

I read the new requirements for *Dungeon Magazine* submissions. They won't allow "excessive gore or violence" and other tasteless things like the murder of children, explicit sex, and Satanism. If your sister publication (and I suspect *Dragon* itself) won't allow such content to be included if it is described in words, then how did you allow it to be pictured in all its glory on a full-page color advertisement?

I hope you got paid well, because my readership has come under question, and I suspect the readership of several other subscribers as well. I also noticed that while this company bought advertising space on not only page 91 and the back cover, no such ads were in the September/October issue of *Dungeon*.

Steven P. Borck • Wolcott, VT

While normally the editors don't see ads before they're printed, we saw these and raised no objection. To us, the images seemed cartoonish rather than offensive, and we figured it was better to err on the side of shock than to fight against printing a paying ad. At least five readers disagreed enough to complain however, so we'll weigh their displeasure against the ad money if the situation arises again.

Another reason we didn't object to the ad was that we were delighted to see a music company pay us money for your eyes. That means people outside the game industry are noticing gamers and our buying dollars.

What do you think? Knowing that plenty of ads from a variety of sources is a sign of a healthy magazine (and a growing hobby), where would you draw the line in outside advertising? We'll print the most interesting responses right here.

BRUTAL CRITIQUE OF THE MONTH!

Peter Whalley didn't hold back in his criticism of the design teams' efforts:

As for the color scheme, ye gods what were you thinking? Not only does it make the magazine harder to read, but it looks ugly!

Dragon art director Peter Whitley responds:

One often-neglected aspect of the environment is color and texture. In your campaigns, consider ways that they might add to your roleplaying experience. If *Dragon*'s colors irritate your eyes, imagine how you might appropriate these themes into your evil temples or beholders' tapestries. I must compliment you on your initials; your parents apparently have better taste than you do.

Thou Shalt Not

In the 23 years I've been gaming, I've never written to *Dragon Magazine* though I have wanted to on several occasions. The recent release of the new edition, the new format of *Dragon*, and an article in *Dragon* #276 has forced me to put in my two coppers.

First, I want to say that while I started gaming with Dungeons & Dragons, I stopped playing it regularly back in the early to mid-eighties. I have always been more of a science-fiction fan and began playing *Traveller* and FASA's *Star Trek* most of the time. I found D&D too limited both in the scope of the rules and in the mentality of the designers.

All of that has changed with the new edition. The rules lack the huge number of arbitrary mandates of older editions (halflings can't be this, the long-lived elves have level limits, and so forth). The new edition has a much better system for handling skills, feats are brilliant, and the sorcerer and barbarian bring in a real touch of fun to character design.

The new look of *Dragon Magazine* is another story entirely. From the dark and uninteresting cover art on issues #274 and #276, to the often difficult to read article titles, I think the redesign needs a bit of work. Also, please put the issue number back on the cover.

Finally, the real reason I've written this letter is because I am appalled by the text in the article, "How to Create a Monster" written by Skip Williams in issue #276. In all my years of gaming I have never been so insulted as I was when I read the words on page 50, bottom of the section on Terrain Types that reads, "Do not create new climate or terrain types." *Do not?* Do not create? Why? Will Wizards of the Coast come and revoke my DMing privileges? Am I subject to a fine by the D&D Good Gaming Commission? How dare anyone tell anyone else what to create and what not to create for their game. While I'm sure Mr. Williams or whomever edits D&D products has a policy for the game line, I see no reason whatsoever why he should pass that mandate to the reader. That line wasn't the first time in the article he puts forward such a statement, but it's the one that really got my goat since two species of sky-dwelling life forms from my old campaign are now impossible according to Mr. Williams. I don't see "air" as a terrain type and since I'm not allowed to write that down under the creatures' descriptions, the poor beasties can't exist. I never thought the words "do," "not," and "create" would be placed together in a roleplaying game product.

I'm not trying to make trouble or be difficult. I am wondering, however, why Mr. Williams is trying to limit my creativity. I thought this game was only held back by the imagination of those who play it. It is this kind of thinking that make me drop D&D in the first place. I hope this is not a trend and I hope this kind of thinking didn't go into the new *Star Wars* game. If it has, creating new planets will be difficult and every gas giant will be uninhabited. How sad.

Adam Dickstein • New York, NY

PROFILES:

JASON CARL

by Michael G. Ryan

THE ROAD BEST TRAVELED

Jason Carl has run the gauntlet of careers in the gaming industry. He served as Policy Director for Organized Play for **Magic: The Gathering**; he designed modules for both the DRAGONLANCE and FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign settings, as well as numerous modules for a variety of White Wolf games; he became an expert in Live-Action-Roleplaying (LARPs); and he joined the Acquisitions roleplaying game team at Wizards of the Coast to design games for new players. With the release of the new edition of D&D, he had a major hand in designing the first in a series of new supplements covering the character classes.

All this from a man who spent his first D&D adventure hopelessly lost in a maze.

FIRST STEPS ON THE PATH

Jason's road to *Sword & Fist*—the new D&D supplement that explores the fighter and monk character classes—did not begin with the greatest of dignity. "Some junior high school buddies back in my home state of Maine first introduced me to roleplaying in 1980," he

VARIETY AND THE "SPICE" OF LIFE

For inspiration in his work, Jason looks just about everywhere. Among his favorite authors are Charles Dickens and Jane Austen, as well as H.P. Lovecraft and J.R.R. Tolkien. While writing *Sword & Fist*, he read from two different worlds (George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones* and Norman F. Cantor's *Inventing the Middle Ages*). He also finds creative motivation in music. "I listened to the soundtrack from *Conan the Barbarian* a lot while working on *Sword & Fist*," he says. But for true inspiration, the most mundane moments or activities do just fine. "I have my best ideas at unusual times and places—while washing the dishes, for instance, or while playing with my cat." He says, however, that he draws no inspiration from the heart of Baby Spice that he keeps in a jar on his desk; in fact, he insists the rumor about the Spice Girl's heart free-floating in a bottle of formaldehyde is pure fabrication. "Nobody takes that story seriously," he says, then adds, "I hope."

LIVE ACTION OR TABLE ACTION?

With an expert background in both forms of roleplaying, Jason concedes that there are some distinct advantages to tabletop roleplaying over live-action roleplaying. "Tabletop roleplaying offers both player and DM a greater variety of tools and methods for running and resolving nearly all aspects of the game," he says. "LARP is far more limited because the environment and action are so immediate—it's hard to compress time, for example, in the middle of a LARP session, whereas that's a relatively simple and common technique for moving the adventure along during tabletop play."

Skip's article began life as an in-house design document, so the prohibition about creating new climate and terrain types is a matter of in-house design protocol, not a prohibition against your creating new ones for your campaign. On the other hand, Adam, if you keep causing trouble about such trifles, we'll have no choice but to send the GGC over to have a few words with you about how you run your campaign.

Forget the Realms!

I would like to offer my thoughts on the new look of *DRAGON Magazine*. As a veteran gamer of eighteen years, and an avid reader for ten of them, I'd like to congratulate you all on a magnificent job! I find the new font quite readable, and I enjoy the new layout. With respect to the cover, the logo is very impressive; perhaps my only critique would be that I think that making the issue number visible would be appreciated.

"How to Create a Monster" was an enjoyable and useful article as usual; Skip Williams impresses me. I've always looked forward to the "Ecology" articles, so "Creature Codex" was quite pleasing. "The Bestiary" was my third favorite article in this issue, even though it was particular to the GREYHAWK campaign setting. In fact, I must applaud James Jacobs for writing a piece that, in my opinion, typifies the kinds of articles that should appear in *DRAGON Magazine*—while being campaign specific, they are written so well that any good DM could take the contents and import them into their own campaign seamlessly.

My second favorite article would have to be "Class Acts." Monte Cook has always amazed me with his writing (I consider the *Dead Gods* to be the paragon of contemporary gaming literature) and does again here. Without question, the "Vs." piece is the best type of article I've seen appear in *DRAGON* in years. Well written, concise, and very useful.

My only major problem with this issue was the "Countdown" piece. If it is the case that GREYHAWK is to be the official default campaign setting of D&D, then can we please leave it at that? Naturally, from a marketing point of view, support for the *FORGOTTEN REALMS* campaign setting is going to continue, but I fail to understand why this should occur in the pages of *DRAGON Magazine*. Surely we are going to see a veritable plethora of FORGOTTEN REALMS resources published in the future; will these not suffice? While I

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am no fan of the FORGOTTEN REALMS (I think they should be forgotten), surely if articles like these are to appear in *DRAGON* they could at least share the same ease-of-use as "The Bestiary" does. Needless to say, my previous comments also apply, if not doubly so, to "The New Adventures of Volo."

Overall, I have to say that the future of *DRAGON Magazine* looks quite bright. Congratulations for continuing to improve upon an already outstanding publication, and kudos to you for listening to your readers. Keep up the exceptional work!

Stephen Dunphy
Grimsby, Ontario

WHAT KIND OF GAMER READS *DRAGON*?

I am no fan of the FORGOTTEN REALMS (I think they should be forgotten).

•

I truly detest the new layout.

•

I'm not trying to make trouble or be difficult.

•

I feel like I've secretly betrayed my girlfriend.

•

I am neither a religious fanatic, nor some doped-up hippie.

•

I never really liked AD&D.

Steam Twist

I am writing to thank you for the very interesting article on the "Age of Steam" by Stephen Kenson. I have been looking for a new twist on the fantasy world, and boy did I find it! Now I can't wait to run my players through a new campaign! I hope that Mr. Kenson can be persuaded to write more articles or contribute to Wizards of the Coast's D&D website.

I have one question concerning firearms: How would you keep them from unbalancing the game? I have decided that firearms are still at the single-shot level of development. My reasoning is that with magic still really powerful, firearms are considered oddities not replacements.

Dan Pack • [address withheld]

Steve sends us articles faster than we can review them, so have no fear that his work will continue to grace these pages—even in this issue and both of the following issues.

As for balancing firearms in your campaign, you have more choices than we could possibly list. Here are a few to get you started:

• Give the villains the same access to firearms.

• Remember that firearms aren't substantially more dangerous than bows—just easier to fire.

• Make gunpowder rare, expensive, or both. Our favorite is one a player once related from another fantasy game: Ensure that gunpowder is rare, perhaps by making it a byproduct of powerful creatures like dragons, who know its value and hide it. After an adventure in which your heroes seek the hidden dung of an elder red wyrm, they might question whether it was worth all the bother just for a few hundred rounds of ammunition.

Prestige Power

First and foremost, let me say that since I was introduced to gaming about six years ago, *DRAGON* has been a fun and helpful read on many occasions.

Issue #267, with its emphasis on the drow, was a most enjoyable and enlightening resource. It was a great help in developing my first character for the new edition.

Today, I picked up issue #276 with the "Create a Monster" article and "Black Cats and Broken Mirrors" articles. The best thing in the issue is the new prestige class: the hunter of the dead. It's a powerful new class that requires your character to make great sacrifices to obtain it. I hope to see many more prestige classes in future issues of *DRAGON*, perhaps a class based on the drow weapon masters.

Keep up the good work! And keep the humor coming, especially more of "Lolth in Space." See if you can swing some of those D&D events down south.

Ron Feeser • Parkin, AR

Because you're such a handsome and charming fellow, Ron, we promise a new prestige class each issue—two or three sometimes. There's no end in sight to Aaron's lampoons of classic adventures. After this issue's visit to the Barrier Peaks, expect a tour of one of D&D's most famous evil temples in just a few short months.

It's Not a Cane—it's a Dice Rake, Like in Vegas

Although I have played DUNGEONS & DRAGONS for a number of years, issue #275 of *DRAGON Magazine* was the first

admits. "I rolled up a dwarf fighter—I'd just finished reading *The Lord of the Rings* and had visions of Gimli dancing in my head—and we played *The Keep on the Borderlands*. From that afternoon on, I was totally and irreversibly hooked." This, despite his dwarven hero's "desperate and ill-fated attempt to escape the maze of the minotaur" in the Caves of Chaos. Just 24 hours later, Jason had his first copy of the game rules and was rapidly on his way to becoming a DM.

But Jason's fascination with the game carried him well beyond just playing or DMing it (he continues to run a D&D campaign for his wife and friends in addition to his involvement in several live-action roleplaying games). When he had the chance to do freelance design work for White Wolf and *DUNGEON MAGAZINE*, the door to his career opened up. Once a member of the Wizards of the Coast RPG R&D team, he was able to design additional modules and adventures for some of the biggest settings in the roleplaying universe (the FORGOTTEN REALMS module *Dungeon of Death; The Apocalypse Stone;* and the "Into the Darkness" adventure that introduced a monster of his own design, the shocker lizard. But Jason didn't begin his career at Wizards of the Coast as a game designer; instead, Jason headed the Organized Play division, where he was constantly overseeing the myriad rules and policies that govern the tournament scene for the trading card game **Magic: The Gathering**. The shift from Policy Director of Organized Play to RPG designer undoubtedly reduced Jason's stress level tenfold, but he's very tactful when discussing that shift. "Both careers have their own rewards," he says, "but I've wanted to be involved in RPG design since I was fourteen—after all, I still remember rolling my first d20. So I couldn't pass up the opportunity to make the switch."

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME

Like most designers, Jason is a player at heart, and he—like nearly every other player—was thrilled with the release of the new edition. "I love the fact that D&D is now all about choices and their consequences. The staggering array of options first available during character creation and later during character advancement just makes me want to stand up and shout 'Huzzah!'"

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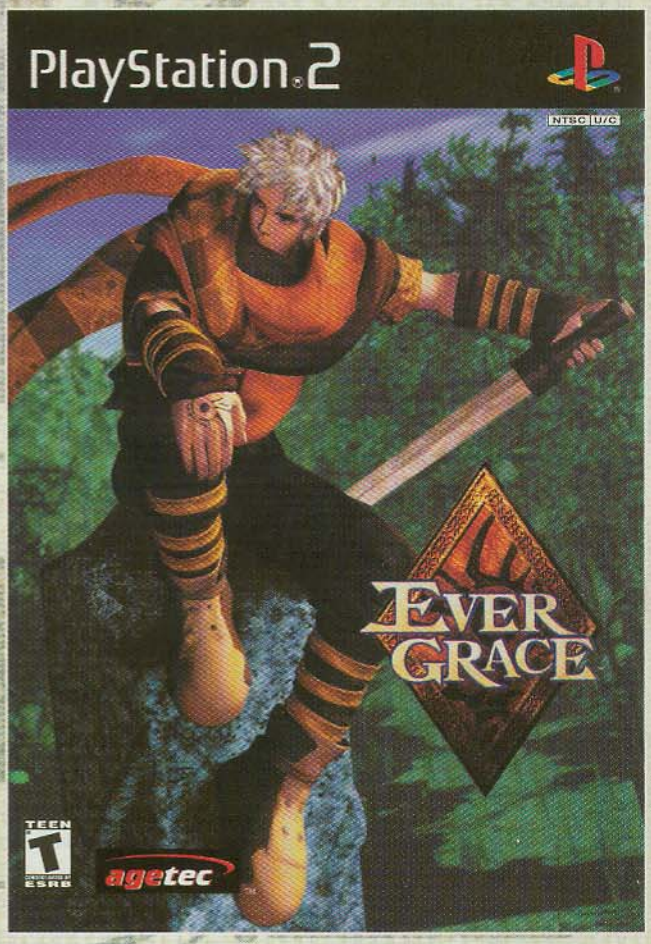

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In addition to the exceptional integrated game mechanics, Jason found Chapters 3 and 4 ("Running the Game" and "Adventures") of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to be particularly invaluable tools for helping him design in the new environment. "But if I had to choose just a few noteworthy changes," he admits, "I'd say that the skill check and saving throw rules are most often in the forefront of my mind when designing new adventures, primarily because of their versatility and depth."

Then there are the character classes. "I think that all the character classes are more interesting to play now," Jason says. "There's now no such thing as a bad character class choice! The monk and bard in particular underwent some significant paradigm shifts that resulted in great improvements to both classes. But if I had to select just one class that's more interesting to play now, I'd choose the cleric. I rarely played clerics before, and now I'm happy to play them."

All these core changes to the environment opened the way for greater expansion and exploration of the classes, and Jason was the designer tapped to begin the process of adding detail to the character classes in *Sword & Fist*. Building Rome in a day was a bit harder than he'd anticipated.

BLAZING THE TRAIL

With the staggering popularity of the new edition, Jason had his chance to add a major contribution to the new system with the invaluable supplement *Sword & Fist*, for which he was the primary designer. "From day one on the project, I knew I had my work cut out for me," he admits. The process of creating the supplement was both exciting and harrowing—because D&D is such an elaborate, carefully constructed system, designers are constantly aware that any new rules or concepts they want to introduce must mesh well with the existing game. "That can be rather difficult when you're charged with the task of creating a number of brand-new feats and prestige classes from whole cloth," Jason says.

Sword & Fist is a testimony to Jason's persistence and diligence as a designer. Players will find an incredible array of new opportunities in the supplement, expanding the fighter and monk classes in ways that make the game more exciting and realistic. "The book is important because it establishes the

I have ever bought. The very first thing I read irritated me, to put it mildly: "Up on a Soapbox," by Gary Gygax. On page 8, first column, last sentence, I quote: "to get a group of young players together."

It has always been my belief that he/she, it/them, young/old, whomever, could play D&D as well as other role-playing games. Just from reading this issue alone I gather that a number of DMs are in their late twenties and older. So how could an editor let this piece of discrimination slip by? I am well over fifty and enjoy both sides of the gaming table. Others my age feel bad enough when they are no longer invited into games because of age. Some even work as clerks in the stores that host the games and go unnoticed. Now your magazine apparently endorses this. It's sad to think that although we have lost some of our dexterity, you also seem to think that we can no longer have the wisdom or intelligence to get your backsides out of a jam when you leap before you look.

Rich Gorman • Columbia, VA

Relax, grandpa! We can tell you're a gamer just by your cranky letter.

We think you're reading too much into Gary's choice of words. Maybe he likes to run games for younger folks to bring them into the hobby, or perhaps most of the gamers in his favorite store just happen to be younger. While we've played with some roleplayers over 60, we haven't seen too many hanging out at the comic shop.

Most of all, thanks for your letter. It reminded us all that we're not that old and irritable after all.

Breaking Up Is Hard To Do

I wanted to write a letter since I've had a copy of the new *Player's Handbook* but it took me a while to do it. My first reaction when I heard that there would be a new edition of D&D was instinctively rejective. I read every countdown to the new edition and, when discussing with friends and other players, I never said something good related to it. That might be because I only saw some parts of the changes but not the whole—nevertheless I was always on the anti-new-edition side.

Then I got my *Player's Handbook* and I read it hungrily, searching for something new to complain about that I hadn't complained about thus far. Of course, I found some new material to discuss with my friends (by the way, most of them thought the same way I did). Seeing all these changes done to *my* game, I furiously sat down at my computer and began an angry letter to the *Dragon Magazine*, Wizards of the Coast, Amigo (the German distributor for D&D products), the German edition of *Dragon Magazine*, the RPGA, and so on, but in my wild fury I wasn't able to express my thoughts in a straight line. So this letter never left my computer.

Some weeks later I sat down and read the *Player's Handbook* again, this time seeing it without prejudice. As a result, I came to the conclusion that the new D&D is more or less a totally new game, not comparable to the changes from the 1st to the 2nd edition. Nonetheless, these rules are pretty good—no they're better than that. I think that I've been caught by the fever most other players have been caught by. I tested the new edition with my group, and I have the sneaking suspicion that the more I use the new rules the more I want to stick to them.

But that leaves me with another unpleasant question: What about the good old AD&D rules? I feel like I've secretly betrayed my girlfriend. You know that can be a bad feeling, especially when your love didn't do anything to earn such a treatment. (Okay, there might be some poor guys that aren't able to feel this way.)

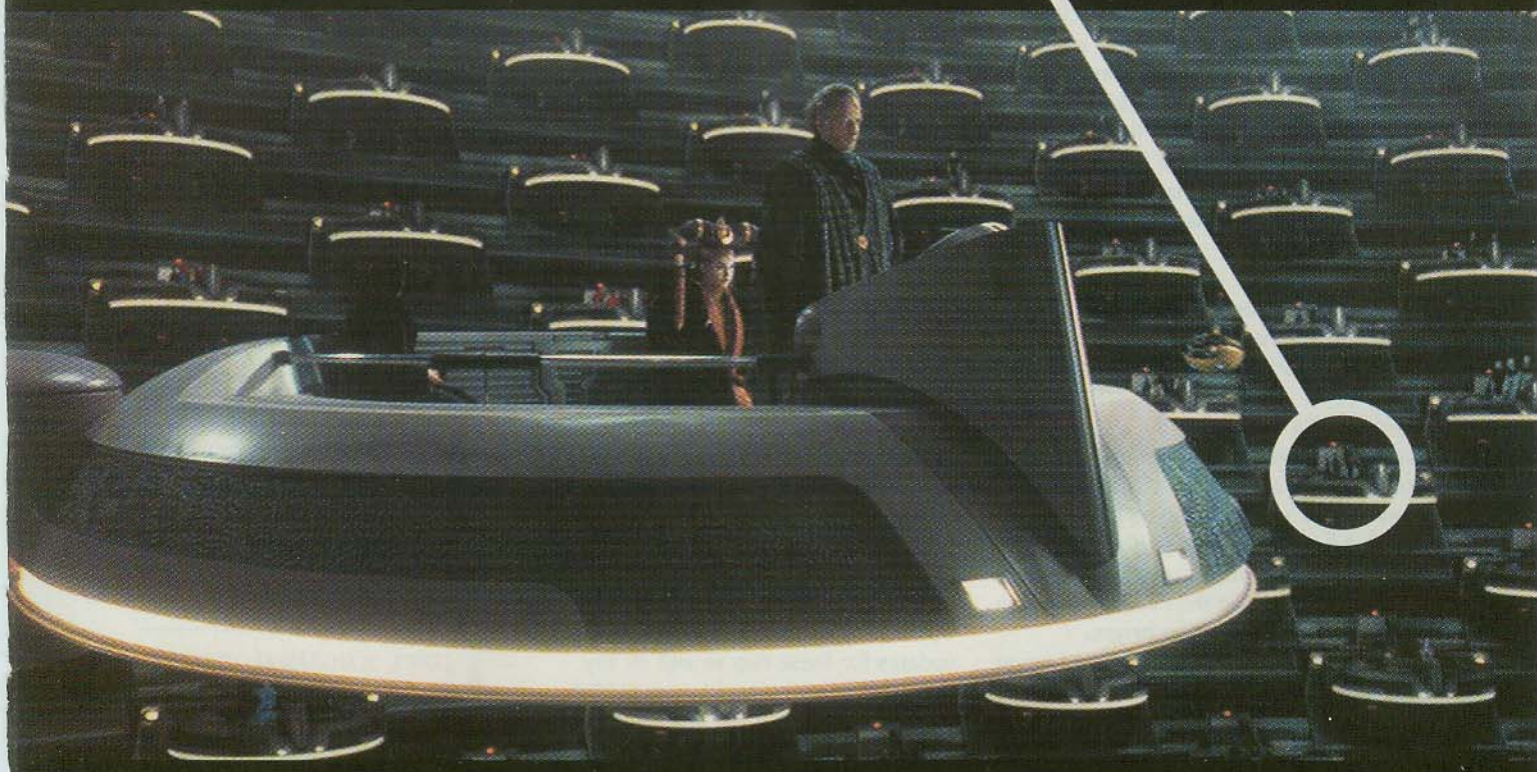
Now, what do you want to do about my feelings? How will I manage this dilemma? Since you introduced me to this new edition of D&D, it's your fault that I'm stuck in such a situation! Don't tell me that it is my responsibility to decide what to do, I know that already. But I hope you have got this bad feeling for destroying my relationship with my "love!"

Holger Campe • Lippetal-Schoneberg Germany

Don't worry, Holger. We already told your old game you were seeing 3rd Edition behind its back. AD&D doesn't want you back, and there's nothing you can do about it now. You can stop sending the romantic dice and character sheets. Think of it as trading up with a little help from your buddies at Dragon Magazine. We're always here to help you with the big decisions.

You'll thank us later.

WHAT'S THIS GUY'S STORY?



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Headings Will Roll!

Great issue! I love the new edition's rules; they are intuitive and encourage, rather than bog down, gameplay. Along with this, I thoroughly enjoy the new format and content of *Dragon Magazine*. I do, however, have a quick question. In your description of the rage mage (p. 98), you list class skills and say: "The hunter of the dead's class skills are:" Now, as interested as I am in the hunter of the dead, I'd be more interested in knowing for sure what the class skills of the rage mage are. Are they the ones listed, or did the error include the list as well as the "hunter of the dead" snafu?

Rich Thompson, Ph.D.
Philadelphia, PA

The heading is wrong, but the skills are correct for the rage mage. We've penalized ourselves 100 XP each for the blunder.

1,000 Years of Dragon

You probably get loads of letters and emails from all over the world, and probably mine is as uninteresting as most of them, but I am so amazed by the new edition, as well as by your magazine, that I herewith have to take the time to write you another of those pesky fan letters.

First of all, I'd like to mention that I never really liked AD&D. The different world settings were okay (and some of them were really awesome), but the system was rather unwieldy and unrealistic, so my players and I never really liked it. I have been playing roleplaying games for almost twelve years now, but AD&D never seemed to be a viable alternative to *Vampire, Call of Cthulhu, Das Schwarze Auge* (a german clone of AD&D with a lower fantasy and magic level) or *Deadlands*. But times have changed.

I work in the retail sales department of one of the big roleplaying publishing houses in Germany, so I heard about the new edition quite some time ago. At first, most of our customers were pretty skeptical about it, but when this skepticism changed into euphoria, I was so intrigued that I actually bought a copy of the *Player's Handbook* myself (which was much more difficult than I expected it to be, as the *Player's Handbook* sold out in Germany *very* quickly). But when I finally received my copy, my expectations had not been for naught.

The new edition is without doubt one of the very best roleplaying games ever to hit the stores. Not only are the basic rules rather easy to learn and understand, but the design and layout of the book has really hit a nerve, at least with me. This is what fantasy should have always looked like. The illustrations are top of the line (although the quality seems to decline from front to back), and they show you characters that stimulate your imagination.

I would like to congratulate the people at Wizards of the Coast for this wonderful book.

On to *Dragon Magazine:* I never liked game magazines much, but *Dragon* shows what happens when professionals who were able to make their hobby a job really put their mind to something—the whole magazine just teems with good articles. As I didn't expect much I was more than pleasantly surprised. Just to illustrate how pleasant this surprise was: though I wanted to buy issue #276 only because of the "Create a Monster" and "Hunter of the Dead" articles, I actually ended up buying issues #275 and #274 as well.

After so much praise one last question: Is there any chance that we will see a new edition of some of the old campaign settings?

I always loved Dark Sun and Planescape (although I never really played them much, as I really hated the AD&D rules), so I would very much appreciate some official updates for these two as well as any others. Maybe you could even publish articles for some of the more popular lines that illustrate the changes, maybe some new professions (such as the gladiator) or changes to the existing ones (such as the Dark Sun bard).

The upcoming *Psionics Handbook* will hopefully solve some unanswered questions, as will the articles about the steampunk and future fantasy, but there's still so much to do and so little time.

Anyway, I am looking forward to hearing from you and once again thank you for bringing us roleplaying for the new millennium.

The best of luck for the next 1,000 years.

Ole Johan Christiansen • Ludwigshafen, Germany

For fans of psionics and the inactive campaign settings, we have good news. In just two months, we'll bring you an issue devoted to the new psionics. For Planescape and Dark Sun fans, we're cooking up a little something extra for you soon.

Join us next month for an issue devoted to the mystic arts, including tips on enhancing your familiar, giving your sorcerer a mysterious background, and concocting new alchemical brews. See you then!

model for those that will follow it," Jason says. "During the design process, I felt like I was blazing new trails, but at other times, I felt like I was getting lost in the wilderness. Fortunately, the RPG R&D team itself is a terrific resource: Some of the best elements in *Sword & Fist* were suggested and/or created by fellow designers."

JUST AROUND THE BEND

Of course, players can look forward to additional supplemental materials for the new edition of D&D; the other character classes will get comparable treatment to the treatment fighters and monks get in *Sword & Fist*. But many of the projects Jason is personally working on now are top-secret; his role in Acquisitions gives him access to some high-profile licenses that might or might not prove to be successful RPG settings, and it wouldn't be prudent for him to promise a product that might not ever make it to the shelves. But of those that he's personally worked on, Jason is able to reveal a bit about one he's just finished—*Diablo 2: To Hell and Back*. This road to Hell is paved only with the best of intentions. "It's a massive D&D adventure based on the wildly successful computer RPG," he says. "It's a mammoth book, chock full of *Diablo 2* goodness."

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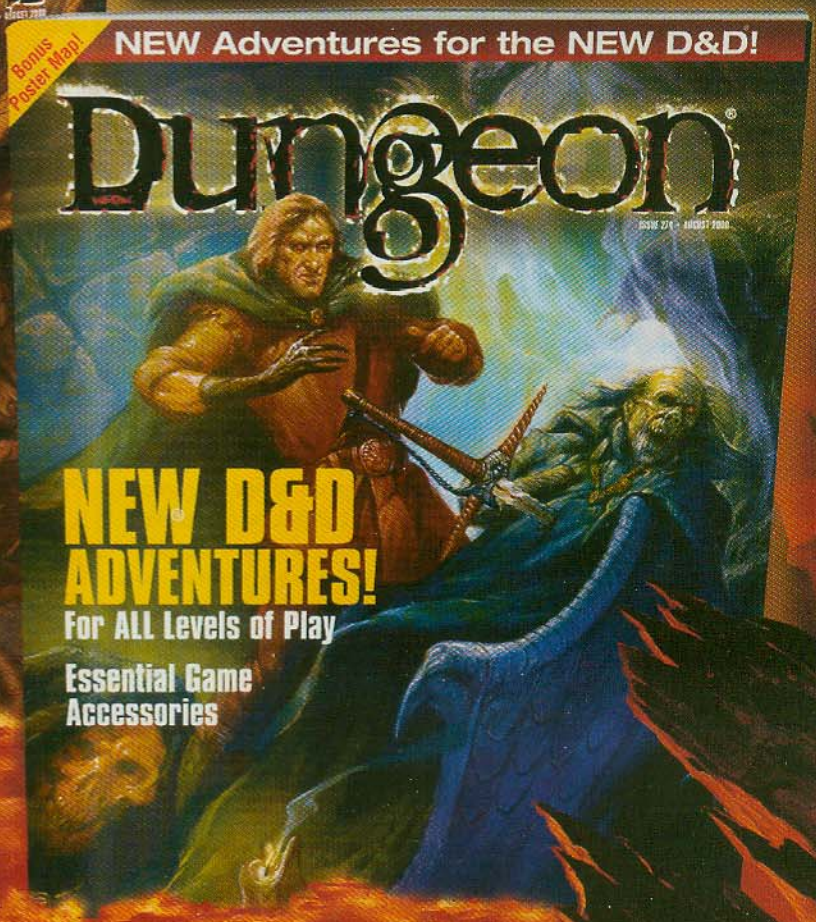

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up on a soapbox

what the heck is a roleplaying game?!

by gary gygax

On the odd chance that you haven't been subjected to the endless quibbling of late about what is and isn't "proper" in a roleplaying game, and what an RPG really is for that matter, let me tell you that there is quite a debate going on. There are those who say the roleplaying game is properly thus and so; others heatedly assert it is something different. Believe it or not, a few folks assert that the original Dungeons & Dragons game isn't really a roleplaying game, even though it is the game that started the whole roleplaying game field. They likewise think that the AD&D game is more a wargame than a roleplaying game. The assertion that "roleplaying is impossible with D&D in any form" is actually made boldly by some.

All of this rancorous debate got me thinking about things analytically. As I had never, until recently, attempted a quantification of the game, I sat down and made a list of all the elements that I consider integral to the roleplaying game form to some degree. After about an hour, I came up with fourteen items that I then passed around. A couple of additional elements I had neglected to list were then called to my attention. So, with sixteen items listed, it seemed a good time to see if most gamers agreed over the parts that belong in a roleplaying game, and at the same time rate each as to how important an element it was.

At left is the survey that has been circulated, a copy of which is posted now on the *Dragon* section of the Wizards of the Coast website (**http://nafsasp.wizards.com/soapbox/welcome.asp**). You are invited to go there and rate the elements in the survey. As you'll see, I listed them alphabetically so as to not give any weight to one or the other by any sort of placement.

What I will do in future columns hereafter is to explain why I think each component is important, let you know how meaningful I deem it in a roleplaying game, and you can agree or disagree. When all of that is through—after four or so issues—I should have sufficient responses to make a statistically meaningful sampling. Right now—although I have some two hundred ratings from all over the world—most responses are from online gamers, well over 90% male, and nearly 100% of them veteran players. Regardless of the validity of the survey, I thought you would enjoy seeing how the gamers who responded rate each element listed, how many 9s there were for an element, as well as how many 0s. The presentation of these results will come at the conclusion of the series.

The Elements that Constitute a Roleplaying Game

Rate each component that is important to a roleplaying game from 1 (least) to 9 (most). If you believe any element listed does not belong in the game, give it a 0.

- ☐ **Building** *(construction, land acquisition, and so on)*
- ☐ **Business** *(an occupation aside from adventuring)*
- ☐ **Character Development** *(detailing the game's personas' histories)*
- ☐ **Combat**
- ☐ **Economics**
- ☐ **Exploration** *(both dungeons and larger discovery)*
- ☐ **Intrigue**
- ☐ **Politics**
- ☐ **Problem Solving**
- ☐ **Questing**
- ☐ **Random Chance** *(encounters, resolution of combat, and so on)*
- ☐ **Role Assumption** *(staying "in character" in actions and thoughts)*
- ☐ **Roleplaying** *(ditto, and speaking thus when playing)*
- ☐ **Story** *(backstory and in play)*
- ☐ **Strategy**
- ☐ **Theatrics** *(occasional histrionics and sound effects)*
- ☐ (You name it and rate it:)_____

Please note:

If you are a female place an "X" here: ☐

If you are new to roleplaying, place an "X" here: ☐

Go to the website to enter your votes. Do not send this form to *Dragon*.

As to the 17th element of the roleplaying game, so far no one has named a component that has been omitted. There are many interesting comments in this area, and I'll summarize these too and note ratings for your amusement and edification.

You might want to wait an issue or two to see what's being laid out before you vote—or maybe not. In any case, when all is said and done, what makes a roleplaying game fun is one thing: the folks playing it. But finding out what makes one tick, so to speak, should likewise be fun for all, so come back next month. D

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DAY		CONVENTIONS	ONLINE EVENT
1	Mon		RPGA Forum (6 P.M.)
2	Tue		
3	Wed		LIVING CITY Time (6 P.M.)
4	Thu		
5	Fri		
6	Sat		Totally Twisted Trivia (8:55 P.M.)
7	Sun		From the Dragon's Mouth
8	Mon		RPGA Forum (6 P.M.)
9	Tue		
10	Wed		LIVING CITY Time (6 P.M.) • RPGA Writer's Workshop (6 P.M.)
11	Thu		Round Robin Trivia (7 P.M.)
12	Fri		
13	Sat		
14	Sun		
15	Mon		RPGA Forum (6 P.M.)
16	Tue		
17	Wed		LIVING CITY Time (6 P.M.)
18	Thu		Round Robin Trivia (7 P.M.)
19	Fri		RPG Hour (5 P.M.) • Industry Edge (5 P.M.)
20	Sat		Totally Twisted Trivia (8:55 P.M.)
21	Sun		
22	Mon		RPGA Forum (6 P.M.)
23	Tue		Sage Advice Live! (5 P.M.)
24	Wed		LIVING CITY Time (6 P.M.) • RPGA Writer's Workshop (6 P.M.)
25	Thu	WINTER FANTASY	Round Robin Trivia (7 P.M.)
26	Fri	WINTER FANTASY • RUNNING GAGG V	
27	Sat	WINTER FANTASY • RUNNING GAGG V	
28	Sun	WINTER FANTASY • RUNNING GAGG V	
29	Mon		RPGA Forum (6 P.M.)
30	Tue		
31	Wed		LIVING CITY Time (6 P.M.)

CONVENTION CALENDAR POLICIES This column is a service to our readers worldwide. Anyone may place a free listing for a game convention here, but the following guidelines must be observed. To ensure that all convention listings contain accurate and timely information, all material should be typed double-spaced or printed legibly on standard manuscript paper. The contents of each listing must be short and succinct. The information given in the listing must include the following, in this order: 1. Convention title and dates held. 2. Site and location. 3. Address(es) where additional information and confirmation can be obtained. Convention flyers, newsletters, and other mass-mailed announcements will not be considered for use in this column; we prefer to see a cover letter with the announcement as well. No call-in listings are accepted. **Warning:** We are not responsible for incorrect information sent to us by convention staff members. Please check your convention listing carefully! Accurate information is your responsibility. Copy deadlines are the first Monday of each month, four months prior to the on sale date of an issue. Thus, the copy deadline for the December issue is the first Monday of September. Announcements for all conventions must be mailed to: "Conventions," *Dragon* Magazine, 1801 Lind Avenue S.W., Renton, WA 98055, U.S.A. If a convention listing must be changed because the convention has been cancelled, the dates have changed, or incorrect information has been printed, please contact us immediately. Most questions or changes should be directed to the magazine editors at (425) 204-8266 (U.S.A.). **Important:** *Dragon* Magazine does not publish phone numbers for conventions. Be certain that any address you send us is complete and correct. To ensure that your convention listing makes it into our files, enclose a self-addressed stamped postcard with your first convention notice; we will return the card to show that it was received. You also might send a second notice one week after mailing the first. Mail your listing as early as possible, and always keep us informed of any changes. Please do not send convention notices by fax, as this method has not proven reliable.

DAY	JANUARY CONVENTIONS
Jan 24–25	**RUNNING GAGG V** New York Email: rungagg@geneseo.edu Web: gagg.geneseo.edu Featuring: RPGs, CCGs, LARPs, RPGA Living City events, computer games, miniature games, dealers, and a charity auction.
Jan 25–28	**WINTER FANTASY** Illinois The Grand Wayne Center, Ft. Wayne • Contact: Event Management • P.O. Box 1740 • Renton, WA 98057-1740 Web: www.wizards.com/rpga/winterfantasy Highlights include the launch of the *Star Wars* Living Force campaign (including a trilogy scenario and LARP) and RPGA's 20th anniversary birthday bash. Guild-level RPGA members admitted free when they preregister. Purchase a Guild-level membership for $20 via the website.

DAY	UPCOMING CONVENTIONS
Feb 24–25	**GAME INVASION** Florida University Center, University of North Florida, Jacksonville Email: info@gameinvasion.net Web: www.gameinvasion.net
Mar 16–18	**CON°FUSION** Alberta University of Alberta, Student Union Building • Contact: Phantasy Gamers Club • Box 37, Student Union Building, U of A Edmonton, Alberta T6G2J7 Email: uapgc@ualbert.ca Featuring: RPGs, CCGs, board games, LARPs, miniature painting competition, dealers, and an auction.
Mar 16–18	**GAMES UNIVERSITY** California Radisson Hotel, Fullerton • Contact: Norm Carlson Email: gamesucon@aol.com Featuring: "Meet the Personalities" Party
Mar 16–18	**STELLARCON 25** North Carolina Greensboro Hilton • Box 4, EUC, UNCG • Greensboro, NC 27412 Email: stellarcon@hotmail.com Web: come.to/stellarcon Featuring: Panel discussion, book readings, costume contest, gaming, charity auctions, book signings.
Mar 22–25	**SIMCON XXIII** New York University of Rochester • Contact: SimCon XXIII, c/o URSGA • CPU Box 277146 • Rochester, NY 14627-7146
Mar 31–Apr. 2	**UBCON** New York University at Buffalo, Buffalo • Contact: SARPA • 316 Student Union, University at Buffalo • Buffalo, NY 14261 Email: kriol@mad.scientist.com Web: wings.buffalo.edu/sa/sarpa Featuring: RPGs, CCGs, and board games.

DAY	ONLINE EVENTS
Jan 6	**TOTALLY TWISTED TRIVIA** 8:55 P.M. PST **It's Twisted!** Been playing D&D since you were just out of the cradle? Own every supplement TSR ever printed? Well, even if you don't, we invite you to test your knowledge in the Totally Twisted Trivia game. Prizes will be awarded!
Jan 7	**FROM THE DRAGON'S MOUTH** 5 P.M. PST **The Trouble With Elves** Dave Gross of Dragon and Chris Perkins of Dungeon deal with all things elven this month.
Jan 10, 24	**RPGA WRITER'S WORKSHOP** 6 P.M. PST Robert Wiese hosts a writer's workshop in the RPGA Events room (accessed through the RPGA Forum) for veteran and budding roleplaying scenario writers. This session is designed to help people become better adventure designers and will delve into topics involved in writing adventure scenarios; this is not a Q&A session. Designed for Guild-level RPGA members, others are welcome to listen, but we will discuss only Guild-level members' scenarios, and only Guild-level members will receive scenarios to read before the sessions.
Jan 11, 18, 25	**ROUND ROBIN TRIVIA** 7 P.M. PST **Get and Give good Trivia** Round Robin Trivia doesn't just demand that you know the answers to tough roleplaying trivia, it demands you know the questions as well. Come ready to give as good as you get!
Jan 19	**RPG HOUR** 5 P.M. PST **Realmswatch: Nations and States** Come hear the philosophical differences behind the old Faerûn geography versus the new! Editor Michelle Carter explains the plans for the North and the Dalelands of Faerûn.
Jan 20	**TOTALLY TWISTED TRIVIA** 8:55 P.M. PST **Dragonlance Special Edition!** Come test your Dragonlance expertise in this session of 3T!
Jan 23	**SAGE ADVICE LIVE!** 5 P.M. PST Think you can stump the Sage with your questions about the D&D, Alternity, and Marvel roleplaying games?
Every Mon	**RPGA FORUM** 6 P.M. PST **HQ Time at RPGA** Every Monday, you'll find RPGA Headquarters staff in the RPGA Forum. Staff will answer questions and shoot the breeze with you (but not engage in in-character chat), so come on by!
Every Wed	**LIVING CITY TIME** 6 P.M. PST Every Wednesday, you'll find a Living City board member in the RPGA Forum ready to answer your questions about our most popular Living campaign. This is your chance to verify rumors, ask questions, and give your suggestions to the campaign board.

DRAGON

Your Sorcerous Life
By Robin D. Laws
What forces converged to grant you the power of dragons? Take this simple quiz to create your character's background.

Better Living Through Alchemy
By Stephen Kenson and Jesse Decker
Put those Alchemy and Craft skills to good use, and learn what marvelous concoctions you can make with them.

Polymorphology
By Johnathan M. Richards
Make the most out of your *polymorph self, polymorph other, shapechange,* and *polymorph any object* spells with these tips.

The Bestiary: Invaders of the Barrier Peaks
By James Jacobs
Unknown to those who faced the monsters of the Barrier Peaks site, another section of the alien craft fell nearby, its contents undiscovered . . . until now.

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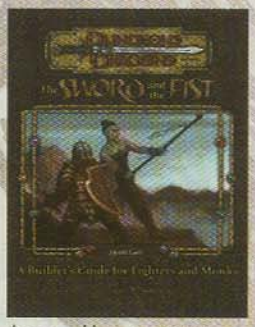
Reports from the Field

d20 Call of Cthulhu coming this fall!

Wizards of the Coast has been granted exclusive rights from Chaosium, Inc. to produce a d20 rulebook for the Call of Cthulhu roleplaying game. Design is underway and the product has been scheduled for a fall release. Call of Cthulhu fans can look forward to rules for horror and insanity, modern era weapons and vehicles, the dark gods of the mythos, and over 60 Cthulhu monsters all compatible with D&D.

Chaosium, Inc. will continue to produce Call of Cthulhu products, and their future roleplaying supplements will contain information to support their use with the new d20 system.



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by Jason Carl

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The Harrowing
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Lolth's daughter has designs on her mother's Demonweb. A D&D adventure for 15th-level characters but adaptable for levels 10-20.

The Dying of the Light
By Chris Doyle
You have from sunrise to sunset to kill as many vampires as you can. A D&D adventure for 10th-level characters but adaptable for levels 5-16.

Dungeon of the Fire Opal
By Jonathan Tweet
Was it destiny or something worse that destroyed the Order of the Opal Fist? A D&D adventure for 3rd-level characters but adaptable for levels 1-5.

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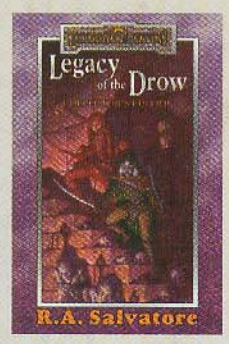

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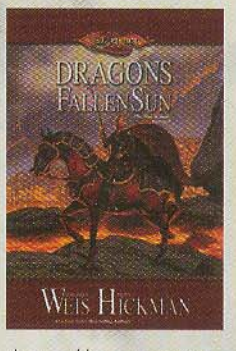

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The people of Krynn have known war in past ages. There are still those who remember the triumph of good at the conclusion of the War of the Lance. Still more remember the devastation of the Chaos War, which ended the Fourth Age of the world. But now a new war looms for the heart and soul of the world.

FEBRUARY

Monster Compendium: Creatures of Faerûn	D&D Core Rulebook	$21.95
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D&D Miniatures: Monsters	D&D Miniatures	$14.95
The Messenger	DL Novel	$6.99

MARCH

Psionics Handbook	D&D Rulebook	$26.95
Diablo II: To Hell and Back	D&D Adventure	$14.95
Downfall	DL Novel	$7.99
The Summoning	FR Novel	$7.99

Nodwick
YOU ARE THE MESSENGERS FROM THE HUMAN LANDS THAT ENCROACH ON MY FOREST DOMAIN?
WE ARE, O KING OF THE WOOD ELVES. WE BRING WORD FROM YOUR ENEMY, KING ZARUNIG.
READ ON, THEN.
"KING ZARUNIG HEREBY PROCLAIMS THE ELVEN FORESTS TO BE A NATURE PRESERVE! ALL HUNTING, LOGGING, OR OTHER SUCH ACTIVITIES ARE BANNED. NO FURTHER HUMAN INCURSIONS WILL TAKE PLACE IF THE ELVES AGREE TO THIS PACT."
WELL! THAT ALMOST SOUNDS REASON—
"AS THE ELVES ARE NOW PART OF THIS PRESERVE, THEY WILL BE REQUIRED TO WEAR EAR TAGS SO THEIR MATING PATTERNS AND HERDING BEHAVIOR CAN BE BETTER STUDIED."
I THINK I KNOW WHY ZARUNIG TOLD US NOT TO READ THIS LETTER UNTIL WE SAW THE ELF KING.
SPEAKING OF WHOM, HE'S TURNING AN ALARMING SHADE OF PURPLE.
DOES THE LETTER SAY WHEN I SHOULD THROW THIS CREAM PIE ZARUNIG SENT?

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countdown to the Forgotten Realms

Realms of the Realms

When the Forgotten Realms setting was first unleashed way back in 1987, the game year was 1357 Dale reckoning. With the launch of the new, 3rd-Edition-compatible setting in June, the calendar moves forward to 1372. That advance in time heralds more than a few changes in the world's most popular Dungeons & Dragons campaign.

What you won't see with those changes is another Realms-shattering event on the scale of the Time of Troubles, which sent DMs scrambling to rebuild their campaigns for 2nd Edition. Instead, the kingdoms and city-states of the Realms have evolved naturally both to take advantage of the cool new rules and to provide more opportunities for conflict and adventure.

THE RED WIZARDS OF THAY

Once these crimson-cloaked minions of Szass Tam spread discord and misery all across the Moonsea nations and as far west as the Sword Coast. Now they collect your hard-earned gold as the magic merchants of Faerûn. Their change in strategy is proving wildly profitable, as rulers in nations like Westgate and Sembia are granting the Red Wizards Enclaves in their cities. Within the walls of these areas, the Red Wizards enjoy the protection of their own laws and customs. Those who venture into these enclaves with enough money can emerge with the finest in potions, wands, and other magic items. Thus, while the Red Wizards still aren't nice guys, you're now more likely to argue over the price of a *bag of holding* than trade *fireballs* . . . at least while you're in their shops.

THE SILVER MARCHES

Silverymoon, Everlund, Sundabar, Mithral Hall and other strongholds formed an alliance in recent years. Their combined territories are now known as the Silver Marches, a bastion against the cruel tribes and oppressive cults of the savage frontier. Beset on all sides by enemies, including the sinister Arcane Brotherhood in Luskan, this fledgling kingdom must fight for survival at every turn. Their most dangerous opponent might be King Obould, an orc barbarian who just might have the power and presence to lead the orcs from the Spine of the World and obliterate the upstarts.

THE SIMBUL OF AGLAROND

One of the best known and most powerful spellcasters in Faerûn is the Queen of Aglarond, known to friends and foes alike as the Simbul. For years she has been the primary defensive force that stands between the Red Wizards and her people. While that hasn't changed—except that the Red Wizards seem more bent on commerce than conquest—what has changed is that the Simbul is no longer a powerful wizard. Instead, in keeping with the new arcane magic rules in 3rd Edition, the Simbul is a powerful sorcerer. What changed her? Why nothing; she's always been a sorcerer. You just weren't looking closely enough before.

MULHORAND INVADES UNTHER

One of the biggest ongoing changes in Faerûn is the conquest of Unther by its neighbor, Mulhorand. Both nations had the distinction of being ruled by living gods. Since the death of Gilgeam, the god-king of Unther, there's been nothing to stop Horus-Re from sending his warriors across the border. The fallout from this bloody war is sure to affect the western nations politically and economically, but what a glorious place for opportunistic adventurers to forge their reputations!

ANAUROCH

Those who've delved beneath the burning sands of the Anauroch desert know that one of the most wicked and powerful races in Faerûn dwell there. The phaerimm are back with a vengeance, at least until an ancient power returns in the form of a mysterious and mobile city. What happens next is still top secret, but suffice to say the heroes of Faerûn will have a whole new reason to fear the great desert.

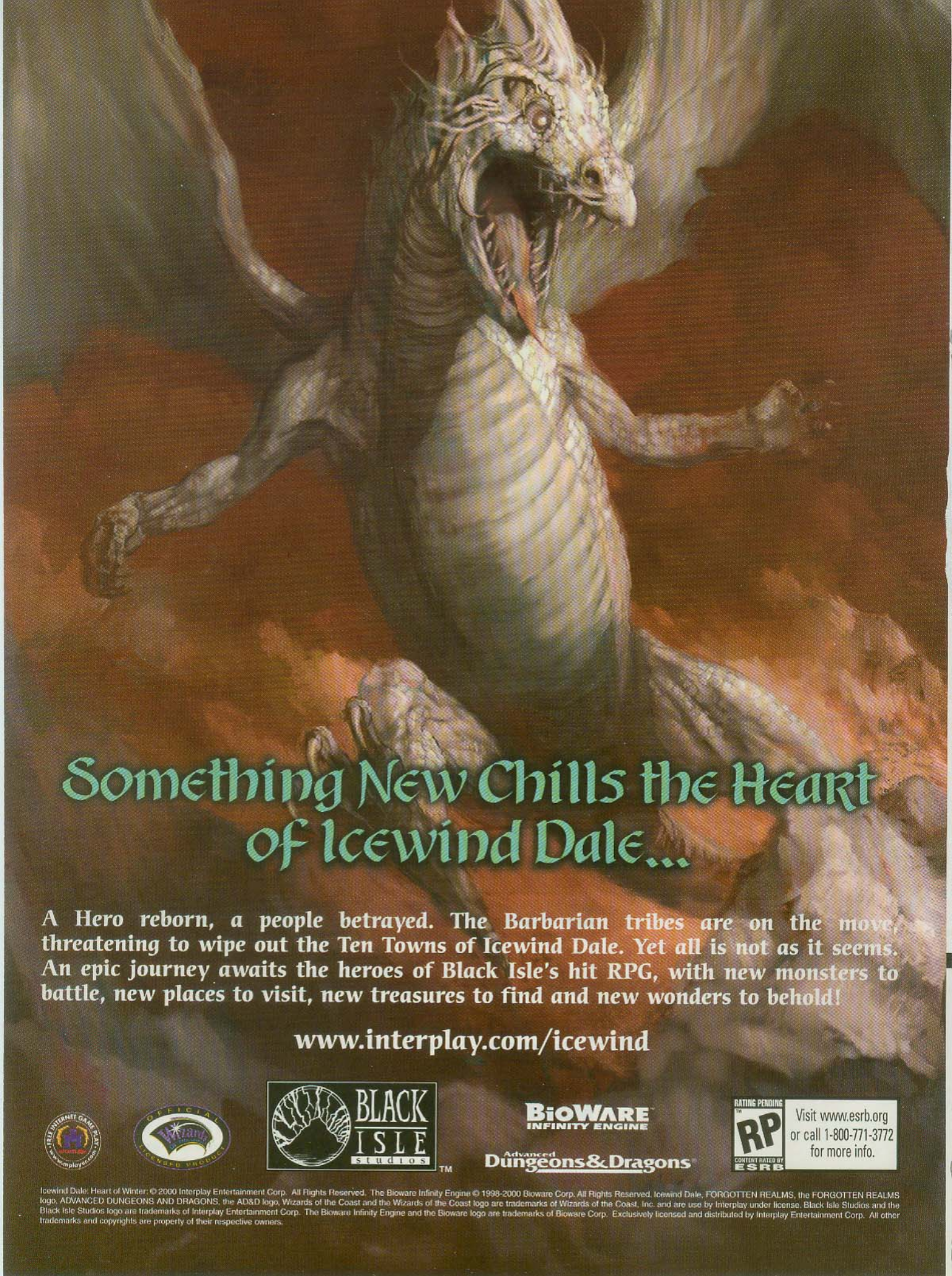
THOSE NAUGHTY ZHENTARIM

Lest those industrious Red Wizards steal all the credit for badness throughout the Realms, the Zhentarim are back with a vengeance, and they're licking their lips as they look south at the Dalelands from their reunified holdings in Mulmaster and Zhentil Keep. Their imperial ambitions have Hillsfar calling for aid from the rich coffers of Sembian merchants, who might be willing to send just enough of their treasure north to aid in Hillsfar's defense, knowing they'd be next in line for conquest. What none of the Zhentarim's likely targets yet know is the cause for their renewed fervor . . . which must remain a secret until the campaign setting arrives in June.

NEXT MONTH

Join us in the February issue for another look at the gods of the Forgotten Realms setting. No, there aren't plans for another picnic on Faerûn, but now they arm their clerics with a powerful battery of new spells and domains, not to mention special powers. D

For more information on the new Forgotten Realms campaign setting, check out the Wizards of the Coast website: **http://www.wizards.com/ForgottenRealms/Welcome.asp**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DORK TOWER
BY JOHN KOVALIC
OK... SINCE YOU SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED LAST WEEK'S ADVENTURE, THIS WEEK WE'LL...
WAIT!
IN HONOR OF OUR GLORIOUS ACCOMPLISHMENT, I SPENT THE WEEK WRITING THE DWARVEN EPIC BALLAD OF TOPDEK, SLAYER OF ORCS, WHICH I SHALL NOW RENDER IN SONG!
"THERE WAS A WAR AND TOPDEK SAW A WAY TO WIN... WIN GREAT FAME.
HE QUESTED FAR AND EVEN MORE HE FOUND HIS FOE... THE ORCS OF BANE!"
"HE READIED HIS AXE, MIGHTY AXE... TERRIBLE BATTLE DID ENSUE!"
"TOPDEK WON THE DAY OF BLOOD AND CARNAGE GREAT... VICT'RY WAS HIS!
THE ORC CHIEF TAKEN PRISONER NOW KNEW HIS FATE... THROWN IN THE PITS!"
EPIC DWARVEN BALLADS ARE USUALLY MORE IMPRESSIVE IF THEY AREN'T SUNG TO THE TUNE OF "MR. BOJANGLES," YOU KNOW...
HIS ORC UP AND DIED... UP AND DIED...
KOVALIC '00

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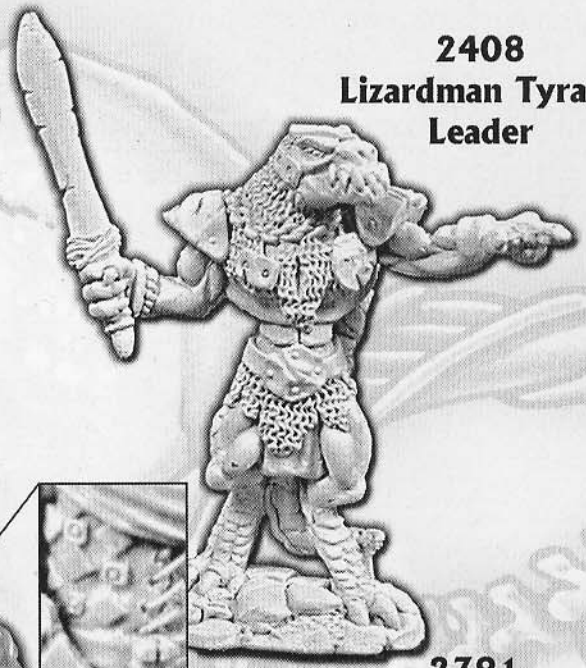
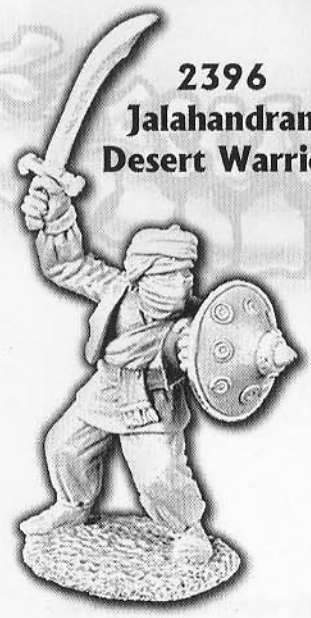


2408 Lizardman Tyrant Leader



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(Designed by Phillip Roop)

(Winner of Reapers On-line painting Contest)

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LEAF & THORN

The Secret Life of Elves

by Robin D. Laws • illustrated by Vinod Rams

When will I feel it, mother?
When will I feel Corellan's touch?
Will it be in the warmth of
the sun?
Or in deep blue starlight?
Will it come when the air is still?
Or when gales blow petals
through the glade?

All of those times and none,
my child;
When he awakens you, you
will know.

— traditional elven nursery song, as translated from Elven

At first, it does not even look like a settlement. The visitor sees only a tranquil forest dale, coursed by a meandering stream. He hears the rustle of willow branches caressed by a gentle wind and the piping of songbirds. Then his eye catches movement. He sees a tall figure, slim as the birch trunks she walks among, slip from the woods and down to the stream, carrying a wicker basket heaped with garments of gossamer and moonsilk. The visitor hails her, for he is known here as a friend and can count on a welcome. She turns and waves, and suddenly the place bursts with life, as the visitor's friends emerge from their well-camouflaged huts to greet him. Laughing elven children bound towards him, and soon he is surrounded by elves both young and old. He feels bathed in their acceptance and love. Yet he keeps a portion of his heart hard to them, understanding all too well that these beautiful creatures could carelessly steal his affections and abandon him on a moment's whim.

He knows more of elves than most, and by resisting the webs of love they so unthinkingly weave around him, he reminds himself of their curious ways. Their every moment, from joyous birth to melancholy decline, marks them as a people apart.

THE YOU AND THE WE

Elves revel in a dual nature. Their love of paradox makes them seem mysterious to other races, but elves do not see themselves as mysterious or exotic; it is the world of people who want things to be one way or another that puzzles them.

The main paradox elves embrace is an idea they call "The You and the We." Outsiders must understand it before they can truly know the elven mind. Young elves learn it in the cradle. It tells them that they must balance their duties to themselves with their obligations to the community. An elf's duty to herself is to always strive to explore her own identity, to pursue experience, and to delve into the depths of her own soul. His obligation to the community is to live in partnership with others and to support their quests for inner

knowledge. These two things are not contradictory. Without a community to clothe, feed, and comfort her, an elf can't enjoy the physical security she needs to pursue her inner quest. Without knowledge of her own spirit, the elf has nothing of true value to contribute to her community. To master the principle of "The You and the We," an elf must make herself truly individualistic, but without a trace of selfishness.

BIRTH

The twin principles of individuality and unselfishness ring through every significant event in an elf's life, starting with his birth. Elves, who strive always for harmony with nature's pattern, celebrate birth as the beginning of a new cycle of life. No event is holier than the birth of a child. Elven mothers do everything they can to deliver their babies in the community where they themselves were born. This custom of returning breathes new life into an elven settlement, reconnecting it to the forces of renewal that keep the world turning. A mother who was herself born away from an elven community will return, if at all possible, to the village where she was raised, or failing that, to the birthplace of one of her parents. In emergencies, any elven community will do. Where none is available, birth in the wilderness is preferable to one among other races.

Elven women remain fertile from around the time of their coming of age (see below) to approximately their 550th birthday.

The elven fetus gestates for approximately twelve lunar cycles. During pregnancy, the mother develops a bond with the developing child. As is well known, elves do not sleep, but slip into trances that renew their souls and bodies. At some time between the sixth and seventh cycles, the child's budding consciousness reveals itself to the mother. Over the coming cycles, she gradually begins to sense what kind of person her child will become. She selects a name for the growing baby, which it recognizes and accepts. The name is kept secret until the moment of birth.

The birth experience serves as the climax of a great communal celebration. Every member of the community encircles the mother-to-be, joyously singing the ancient chants handed down to them by the birthing goddesses. Both

RITUALS OF THE LAND

The chief elven deity, Corellon Larethian, grants the following divine spells to community priests and priestesses. By convention, priests cast the forager's blessing spell, while priestesses conduct the womb of the earth ritual. However, clerics of either sex can perform either spell.

FORAGER'S BLESSING

Divination
Level: Clr 0, Rgr 1
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: One action
Range: Touch
Target: One elf per level
Duration: 1 hour per level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell is cast on a group of foragers before they head off into the wilderness to look for edible plants and small game animals. The cleric places his hands on the shoulders of each target as he blesses each in turn. For the spell's duration, recipients enjoy a +2 bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when attempting to find food.

If the DM decides that what happens during the foraging attempt is of secondary importance to the adventure, he can, in place of Wilderness Lore checks, simply announce that the foragers return from their efforts with an especially pleasing array of nuts, berries, mushrooms, and game birds.

WOMB OF THE EARTH

Transmutation
Level: Clr 1
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 15 minutes
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft. per 2 levels)
Area: 15 ft. radius burst + 10 ft. per level
Duration: Instantaneous (D)
Saving Throw: No
Spell Resistance: No

This spell transforms a wilderness area of light vegetation, like a natural clearing or the site of a recent forest fire, into a patch of ground ready for cultivation that enables food plants to grow to harvest maturity in 24 hours. Plants and animals currently inhabiting the site are not harmed or destroyed; both simply move to the edges of the new field. The spell clears furrows in the ground and fertilizes in a manner best suited to the type of seed specified by the caster. Farmers must still tend the garden as it grows, removing weeds and pests.

Residual magic lingers in the patch of ground. Within 24 hours after the food plants are harvested, the surrounding plants and animals retake the land. No sign remains that the ground was ever cultivated.

The spell cannot be cast on densely forested areas, nor on places cleared of trees by farmers or others acting on their behalf.

women and men, young and old, attend the ceremony and witness the miracle of being. They behold it with neither shame nor revulsion. Elves recoil at the suggestion that births are somehow unclean, or that they should be kept hidden from the world. Elven births are easier on their mothers than those of other races; they suffer little pain. (This is not true when the baby is only half-elven; these births can be agonizing and dangerous.)

Elves almost always retain vivid memories of the moment just after they emerge into the world, when they are held up for the community to see. They remember the special song their new neighbors sing to them. When the time comes for an elf to attend her first birthing, she finds she knows the song without having been taught it.

CHILDHOOD

An elf's memories of childhood (the next fifty or so years) are rarely so clear. Childhood is a time of play and exploration, all carried out under the watchful eyes of the community's adults, who are keenly aware of the hazards lurking in even the most tranquil natural setting. Although elves value direct experience over second-hand learning, there are certain things that can only be taught. Children learn to look for danger before exploring, to recite the names of the thousand elven gods and spirits, and to imitate their elders in the making of crafts, clothing, and hunting implements. Although the child learns to recognize and accompany his mother and father, other family distinctions are unimportant. Children, already in pursuit of their individuality, are allowed to form bonds to the adults to whom they feel most attuned. Every member of a community swears, during the birthing ceremony, to lend the best of his or her knowledge and spirit to the new child. If a child grows up to be selfish, dulled to beauty, or unamusing, the entire community has failed. If a child succumbs to the forest's dangers, all share the tragedy of a life taken before its time.

Although there are some slight differences in outlook between elven men and women (see below), these are tendencies, not enforced rules to which children are expected to adhere. A child is neither pressed into learning a family trade or adopting its artistic traditions. In elven culture, lines are meant to be blurred, and distinctions are but a thing of temporary convenience.

ALL ELVES LOVE MAGIC AND FEEL IT IN THEIR BONES LIKE PERHAPS NO OTHER RACE.

SEX ROLES

As much as elves delight in testing boundaries and confounding definitions, even they must admit that some generalizations can be made about the roles of men and women in their society.

Both men and women frequently take up the professions of hunters and warriors. However, some male elves are seized by wanderlust and seek their true selves by exploring the adventures and dangers of the wider world. Female elven fighters, on the other hand, sometimes feel a need to stay closer to home to guard the ones they love. As a result, they often become the foresters, guards, or militia of their communities. The need to seek an epiphany (see the following page) overrules all else, though, and no elf hesitates to pursue any course her heart tells her to follow.

Both men and women are equally as likely to play a musical instrument in elven society. However, men tend to prefer the vocal arts and wind instruments, and women have a slight tendency to pick up percussion or stringed instruments. A mixed quartet of elven bards is said to be capable of bringing a god to tears.

Both genders are equally represented among the priesthood and the ranks of arcane spellcasters. All elves love magic and feel it in their bones like perhaps no other race.

In terms of the less violent crafts, many elven men enjoy woodcarving, pottery, and crafts that require shaping material with their bare hands. Elven women, on the other hand, lean toward crafts such as painting, weaving, and other crafts that require an active imagination and a gentle, creative touch. In general, though, elves love the feeling of bringing a new shape to something that nature has created. They find great joy in turning the mundane into the magical and the normal into the brilliant, and any effort to work in harmony with nature is a noble one.

It bears repeating, though, that elves are much less likely to follow the unwritten rules of their societies than

THE PURSUIT OF BEAUTY

Elves believe that any object a person makes should be as beautiful as its maker can manage. The most-used objects should be the most attractive of all, because they're the items one spends the greatest time looking at.

Elves work to heighten all of their senses, so it is not good enough that an item look pretty. It should smell pleasant and be rewarding to the touch. When accidentally dropped, it should make a pleasant ring or chiming sound, not a nasty clatter.

There is no item so humble or unworthy that it should not be decorated. Even weapons of war receive loving craftsmanship. In a scene from the elven verse epic Arranyn's Brothers, an orc general, pierced by Arranyn's arrows, pauses before expiring to reflect on the extreme perfection of their design. Though poetic license is obviously at work here, the passage does reveal the elven attitude toward artisanship.

Definitions of beauty vary by region. Elves in one place might favor detailed ornamentation, never feeling satisfied by a piece unless its every square inch is covered in complex patterns. Their distant neighbors might favor the mystical harmony of extreme simplicity.

are the members of any other race. Every community boasts its share of wolfish, wandering female hunters and homebound, peaceable male weavers.

ADOLESCENCE

The fifty-year span between childhood and full adulthood is the most important in shaping an elf's character and determining his spiritual path. Elves call this the *beryn fin*, or "time of discovery." Beryn fin, the onset of puberty, with its wrenching emotions and romantic urges, is twinned with an even more powerful mystical awakening.

SEXUAL EXPERIMENTATION

Other races generally consider the sexual freedom of elves shocking, fickle, and endlessly fascinating. The folk tales and rumors they repeat are much more scandalous and colorful than what really goes on. To an elf, sexual expression is just one item on a long list of experiences anyone should explore in the course of forging an identity. Experimentation with a range of partners is no more or less odd than tasting the juice of a dozen berries, following the path of plume-seeds as winds carry them through the woods, or learning the secret names of the forest's animals. Still, a young elf's exploration of love and lust should be as complete as any other quest he or she embarks upon.

Elves hold no double standards in their games of coupling and uncoupling. Males and females are both encouraged to fully express their physical yearnings. Young females can blithely pursue their infatuations because the low fertility rate of their long-lived species makes pregnancy unlikely. Children born out of wedlock, though rare, face no special prejudice in an elven community.

Young elves seem fickle to other races because they are able to move from one partner to the next without suffering the pangs of separation or unrequited love. Casual liaisons are a common and accepted part of social interaction. An elf might have partnered in the past with a large number of contemporaries in his or her community and feels no lingering feelings of shame or awkwardness in their presence. They might fondly recall the joys of an old rendezvous, but give it no more weight than they would the recollections of a delightful shared meal or a satisfying day of rock climbing.

GROWING RESPONSIBILITIES

Alongside their pursuit of pleasure, adolescent elves are expected to slowly take on the duties of mutual support and protection that keep a community together. Males and females alike must master the basics of combat, especially with the bow. They must learn to keep themselves at constant attention during a long watch—not an easy task for an easily-distracted, questing young mind. Adolescents take part in the community's foraging, farming, and hunting activities. During this time, they must also learn to make useful and beautiful things.

EPIPHANIES

Both pleasure and responsibility are less important than the young elf's spiritual progress. Elves do not draw a line between the everyday world and the realms of the gods. Although everyone knows that Corellon Larethian and his pantheon dwell in a lush and verdant quadrant of the outer planes, their presence also permeates the Prime Material Plane. The spiritual touch of Corellon Larethian can be found in any place where elves live in harmony with nature. An elf does not simply listen to a priest tell him about his god; he goes into the wilderness to seek his presence, to feel the deity's breath upon his skin, and to hear the words of wisdom he whispers in his worshippers' ears. Young elves are encouraged to spend hours in solitude out in the wild until they encounter Larethian's spirit.

The moment of epiphany, when an elf's inner senses open up and his entire being is flooded with an awareness of the divine, is the pivotal moment in any elf's life. He does not describe it to anyone, even to his closest love or his own children, except in the vaguest terms. It is hard, then, to reliably say much about this instant of supreme mystery. Each elf seems to experience it differently. Despite the imaginings of certain non-elven scholars, who picture the event as a grand vision of a glowing avatar of Corellon Larethian appearing to the quester, the moment is a profoundly subtle. The elf might come to know the god by seeing an especially sublime pattern traced in the veins of a crumbling leaf, or in the knowledge of imminent power found in the disturbed air that precedes a thunderstorm.

An elf spends his years of beryn fin in spiritual preparation for this moment, receiving tantalizing hints and premonitions of its true significance. It usually occurs during the elf's one-hundredth year. Some elves, especially those whose births were accompanied by auspicious signs and portents, might experience it as soon as age seventy-five. These individuals often go on to become great priests or priestesses, or mighty heroes. A few unlucky souls find that epiphany eludes them, usually because they're trying too hard to force the moment to occur. Most, after priestly counseling, experience the awakening no more than a decade or two late. A rare few never taste it. Growing bitter and frustrated with the loving pity they receive from their friends and neighbors, the malawain, or "unawakened," often choose self-exile, leaving the world of elves to settle in foreign cities or wander as rootless adventurers. Malawain rarely admit their status, even to those who couldn't care less about elven spiritual development.

When an elf experiences the Awakening, she is transformed. She declares herself an adult, marking her newfound individuality by selecting a new name for herself. She has become an equal of any adult in the community.

ELVES DO NOT DRAW A LINE BETWEEN THE EVERYDAY WORLD AND THE REALMS OF THE GODS.

ADULTHOOD

The elf's relatives and neighbors might be slow to adopt the elf's newly-chosen name. Elves, for whom a decade is like the blinking of an eye, take a while to adjust their impressions of others to match new circumstances. Elderly, doting relatives are especially prone to use an elf's child-name as a term of endearment. Some individuals accept this; others bristle.

NOW, WHEN SHE CREATES A WORK OF ART . . . SHE IS ERECTING A BULWARK AGAINST HATRED AND UNTHINKING DESTRUCTION.

AGAINST EVIL

Although a crusty dwarf or impatient human might not notice it, the newly matured elf has undergone a sudden change. She has lost the innocent playfulness of beryn fin. Although she continues to seek out moments of beauty and pleasure, she now does so for a different reason and in an altered spirit. In achieving her moment of oneness with the elven gods, she has also sensed the inescapable, lurking presence of their opposites: the gods of evil and their minions. She understands that her efforts to live lightly on the land and protect the community from enemies are part of a greater struggle to protect existence—especially the natural world—from cruel and powerful entities that constantly scheme to destroy it.

An elf fights evil not only by remaining vigilant against signs of its taint but by embracing the beauty of the world. Now, when she creates a work of art, she is not just making herself and those around her happy. She is erecting a bulwark against hatred and unthinking destruction. She can't allow herself to be consumed by fear or hatred of the enemy, because it is through these corrosive impulses that evil does its work. She must defy evil by bringing joy into the world and by continuing her quest to know her true self.

ELVEN ADVENTURERS

About one in two hundred elves spends part of her life as a wandering adventurer in search of exotic experience; almost none of them devote more than a century or two to such pursuits. An elf who leaves the company of her fellows to delve through muck-encrusted dungeons with surly dwarves and impetuous humans is, by definition, an eccentric. Fortunately, elves celebrate individuality and treat returned adventurers with excited curiosity, not contempt or fear.

COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Upon reaching adulthood, elves continue their sexual explorations. Eventually, though, each discovers that his heart has developed a capacity for lasting and exclusive love. Like most other important things in their lives, elves describe this in mystical terms. They believe that a person's spiritual progress is unknowingly intertwined with that of another. This soul-mate is called a thiramin. Upon meeting his thiramin, an elf's heart fills with passion and certainty. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the other party is felled by the same feeling of immediate and eternal devotion. (Though rare, an unrequited feeling of thiramin is always disastrous, bringing centuries of wrenching heartbreak. Sufferers often commit suicide or succumb to the temptations of evil.) Elves almost always feel thiramin for people they meet for the first time: In other words, visitors from other communities. Intermarriage between communities strengthens the bonds of communication between settlements, allowing them to quickly band together against the armies of evil that march across the land.

Perhaps five couples out of a hundred form when elves who have known each other since childhood suddenly look upon one another and fall into a state of thiramin. When this happens, it is almost always the case that the two elves have previously treated each other as bitter rivals.

The certainty of thiramin is never allowed to interfere with the experience of a long and protracted courtship. Where adolescents will hop into the hay with one another on the slightest provocation, a couple swayed by thiramin might heighten their moment of ecstasy by delaying it for decades or even centuries.

Elven marriage ceremonies are stately and beautiful, often lasting for weeks. Poetry recitations, musical performances, and theatrical events all retell the great love stories of elven lore. Non-elves often find the protracted dignity of these occasions unbearable. The wild debauchery that begins after the husband and wife have retired to the nuptial bed might surprise them.

Though they prefer to stay close together, married couples are capable of spending long periods of time apart. The feeling of connection they have for one another makes a missing partner feel close at hand, even when she is far away.

LIVING OFF THE LAND

Elven communities support themselves with the bounty of nature. Regarding themselves as just another part of the natural world, they hunt, forage, and farm in ways that maintain its cycles of renewal. Aided by magic, they're able to produce food and shelter for themselves while leaving the area around them in its original state. They keep their communities small and spread out so as not to overtax the land. Their low birth rate helps them accomplish this. The goal of an elven community is subsistence, not wealth or profit. As is the case in any community that aims only to sustain itself, specialized labor is uncommon. People divide their time according to what they do best, but every capable individual does at least a little farming, foraging, hunting, and crafting.

TRADE

Some communities completely discourage trade with other races, or even with neighboring elves. Several common elven folktales tell of the first elves to discover trade; they invariably

CORRUPT ELVES

Although the religion and culture of the elves puts them at odds with the forces of evil, elves are no more immune than other species from its temptations. Demons take special pleasure in leading elves astray, which they do by making mental contact with them as they quest for their epiphanies. Some pose as Corellon Larethian, tricking the gullible. Others offer the wealth and dominance that elven society turns its back on. Self-pitying malawain, convincing themselves that they have been cast out by Larethian, are especially prone to their manipulation.

It does not take long for the typical elven community to notice the odd behavior of an obviously cruel or insane servant of evil. But more clever types might thrive for decades, if not centuries, subtly taking advantage of a community's trust to thwart their protective efforts and allow corruption to gain a foothold around their lands. Although elven tolerance is vast, a community member who reveals his evil nature faces execution unless he escapes.

bring near ruination upon all of elvenkind. Other groups are more permissive of trade, so long as it doesn't drive them to deplete local resources. Even they refuse to trade for those things they can make or gather themselves; to do so would be not only to admit failure but also to accept dependence on unreliable outsiders. Elves, who love the beautiful and exotic, are much more likely to trade for luxury items. They like pretty stones, decorative jewelry, wondrous magic items, and unfamiliar musical instruments. Their sense of value is very different from a human's or dwarf's: They might offer a fist-sized nugget of gold in exchange for the performance of a song, or a jar of fireflies for an emerald-encrusted scepter.

Elves who live in human settlements come to accept the necessity of trade and the standard values of items in order to survive among them. Elven adventurers quickly learn the importance of purchased gear; when they retire to their communities, they might act as intermediaries between their kin and puzzled peddlers.

LEADERSHIP AND AUTHORITY

As lovers of freedom, elves recoil from authority wielded for its own sake. Yet they recognize that in times of crisis, it is sometimes necessary to follow the directions of a wise leader.

Within communities, leadership stays informal. Community leaders can't force their people to do anything; they rely on their reputations and the merit of their words to gain cooperation. Everyone knows everyone else, and people know who to ask for advice when they need it. They seek the counsel of a small handful of revered elders, each of whom claims centuries of experience and achievement in a particular area. One elder, probably a priest or priestess, might understand more about cultivation than anyone else. Another knows the local forests inside out and can best supervise community defense. A third might claim the greatest expertise in foreign warfare; she takes charge of the village's warriors when they go forth to fight evil. A visitor who asks the name of a village's leader might get five or six different answers, depending on the nature of her business.

Each community recognizes a king or queen who maintains authority over dozens, sometimes even hundreds, of small communities. Their positions are hereditary; each traces descent from elven heroes of the ancient past, and through them, to Corellon Larethian himself. Monarchs must live up to their hallowed pedigrees by making good decisions and winning battles against evil. If they lose the respect of a community, it might enact a ceremony of severance to transfer its allegiance to a ruler of another lineage. Luckily, monarchs take their duties seriously, and this rarely happens. The charisma of elven royalty is stunning; even non-elves who spend time with such rulers find themselves wanting to serve.

In peacetime, a monarch's main duties are ceremonial. She spends two-thirds of a year traveling from one community to another, where she presides over rituals, judges competitions, enjoys performances, accepts endless poetic tributes, and blesses the crops.

Monarchs don't tax their subjects, but are typically burdened with hundreds of luxurious gifts at the end of each royal visit. They carry these home to their courts, where they are put on display. In times of dire emergency, they might be traded, mostly in human cities, for armaments.

When not touring, kings and queens hold court in fabulous surroundings. Some elven palaces are ancient structures of gleaming marble; others are made of magically-intertwined, living trees. Their locations are kept secret; otherwise, they'd be too tempting a target for raiders.

While at court, elven rulers throw lavish feasts. They sponsor festivals and tournaments to build fraternal feelings between communities. The monarchs, or their senior courtiers, mediate disputes between elves from different settlements. Human observers often remark on the absence of flattery in elven court life. Although an elven queen enjoys compliments as much as any elf (which is to say, quite a lot), she sees them as her due. It does not occur to her to reward those who give them with gold or treasure.

JOURNEY INTO TWILIGHT

Beginning around an elf's six hundredth year, her blood begins to slow, her thoughts start to cloud, and her bones grow tired. Elves train themselves all their lives to accept death as an integral part of nature's cycle. Even so, they usually find it hard to adjust to the dimming of their senses, which makes it harder for them to experience pleasure. An elf's declining years are often melancholy ones. She might spend them composing her memoirs in epic verse, hoping that her descendants will memorize and repeat them for generations to come. She might retreat to a hermitage or isolated cave to contemplate the nature of existence. A very few misguided souls turn to blackest sorcery to extend their lives, becoming liches. But most surround themselves with their fellow villagers, trying to impart the wisdom they've gained and take heart in the laughter of children.

Burial customs vary. Where the soil is lush, bodies are buried to nourish the land, repaying it for a lifetime's bounty. Where the ground is hard, they are cremated, and their ashes sent on the winds for one final, unpredictable journey.

Some elves hold that after death, their spirits go to dwell in a verdant paradise with the kin of Corellon Larethian. Others believe in an eternal cycle of reincarnation, in which their spirits return to earth just as an evaporated puddle eventually falls as rain. The true answer remains for each seeker to find herself. D

DIVORCE

The condition of thiramin (soul binding) can sometimes vanish as quickly as it came. Again, the feeling of sudden disconnection is almost always mutual. The end of thiramin can almost never be traced to a specific cause, like a fight or an incident of infidelity. Instead, it is seen as an indication that the partners' spiritual paths have diverged, and that Corellon Larethian's divine plans for them call for their parting. The evaporation of love is accepted with mournful resignation. The couple quietly breaks up their household, relying on community leaders to spread the sad news. One partner usually leaves the community in search of his or her new destiny. An elf doesn't usually feel hate or bitterness towards an ex-partner, but still suffers a sense of loss and pain while in his or her presence.

Thiramin can sometimes be broken by outside forces. A ritual known to certain covens of evil clerics can sever the bond between husband and wife. It requires the capture of a personal item co-owned by the targets. Adventurous friends of the sundered couple can break the spell, and reknit the bonds of marriage, by recovering the item and destroying the priest's ritual implements. The unhappy mates normally don't assist in this, as they lose all desire to reform the relationship.

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REVENGE OF THE SPIDER QUEEN

by Monte Cook • illustrated by Carlo Arelano

In the dark recesses of the Abyss lies the Demonweb. There lives Lolth, Demon Queen of Spiders and patron of the drow. Angering her is never wise—she is willing to go to great lengths for vengeance. In fact, she has culled from her most powerful followers a group of foul but deadly enforcers and forged them into a strike team dedicated to one purpose: revenge.

These individuals are collectively known as the Hand of Vengeance. They dwell within the Demonweb, each called upon for special missions directly by Lolth herself, although their leader Jaggedra Thul is the only one that actually speaks to Lolth in most cases. Each has gained a special blessing from the goddess to aid them, in the form of magic equipment, ability score increases, or other special powers.

MISSIONS OF THE HAND OF VENGEANCE

The types of missions in which the Hand of Vengeance take part usually involve attacking someone, either in an ambush or an assassination attempt in the target's home. They are always proactive and used for attack—never defense. Few ever see the Hand of Vengeance unless they want to be seen—and those that do are usually quickly slain.

Those who number among the enemies of Lolth include:

- Those who would trespass into the Demonweb and wreak damage or kill servants
- Those who would steal from her
- Those who would slay her most trusted servants, including clerics of 17th or higher level
- Those who would steal from or harm her most trusted servants, and in so doing harm her plans or important sites dedicated to her
- Most importantly, those who would take up arms against Lolth's children or Lolth herself

Committing any of these acts does not necessarily insure that Lolth sends the Hand of Vengeance to slay the transgressors (sometimes her divine attentions are directed elsewhere, and sometimes her motives are strange, alien, and most of all, chaotic). However, the chance for an encounter with the Hand of Vengeance is likely enough that interlopers should never be able to sleep soundly again.

GROUP TACTICS

The Hand of Vengeance prepares as much as it can ahead of time for an attack against a designated target. Sierona uses her *clairvoyance/clairaudience* ability, as well as scouting the area out invisibly and ethereally if possible. Vinter uses Divination spells to learn what he can. If the target seems well protected, they might even resort to capturing and interrogating those near and dear in order to gain more information, and possibly some leverage to draw the target out.

If there are multiple powerful targets, the Hand of Vengeance might attack them individually. They love fighting foes when their opponents are at their most vulnerable—they thoroughly enjoy exploiting and mocking enemies caught at a bad time or in an unfortunate circumstance. For example, if their foe is having an affair with the queen of the land, they attack when the two are

indisposed so that the target is not only slain but the tryst is exposed and the most embarrassment, anger, and misery are inflicted on the most people.

The Hand of Vengeance has used the following tactics in the past:

- Approaching a target in disguise (this is Sierona's area of expertise)
- Inflicting a target with a disease (often followed up with an actual attack when the target is weak)
- Poisoning the drinking water of the community that the target lives in
- Poisoning the target's food
- Attacking with summoned monsters repeatedly, over the course of many days, to weaken a target's defenses.
- Using Enchantment spells to control or convince the target's friends and allies that the target is insane, evil, untrustworthy, or otherwise not really their friend—Sierona and Vinter are very good at this, but Jaggedra's spells and vampiric abilities also make her effective at turning people against each other
- Holding the target's loved ones hostage to draw him out

That said, the Hand of Vengeance prefers a more straightforward approach when possible, both because they enjoy inflicting physical pain and because they are inherently lazy and chaotic.

If necessary, the members of the Hand of Vengeance procure bribes or needed equipment (or the money to buy such) from Lolth's storehouses. Each of them is able to draw upon up to 500 gp per level in wealth or equipment. If targeting non-good foes, members of the Hand that can alter their spell selections do so accordingly.

THE ACHILLES HEEL

The one weakness that the members of the Hand of Vengeance have is something that they would never see as such: their own evil and chaotic natures. They rarely help each other with spells or work to save each other in combat. The exceptions to this include the group's willingness to help Sierona set up flanking positions and Vinter's willingness to cast helpful spells on the others (to make them reliant on him). But for the most part, one will abandon, betray, and even hurt the others to save himself, and it often does not occur to them that helping an ally betters their own position.

THE MEMBERS

The following individuals are the members of the Hand of Vengeance. If one is slain, he or she might be resurrected or replaced. When running these NPCs, remember that above all else they are wicked and depraved—although each in their own way. They laugh at their enemies as they inflict wounds. Ruthless to the extreme, each uses his or her most potent attacks first. The only instance in which they accept surrender is when they want to take a prisoner for interrogation and sadistic torture. They pause to make sure a downed opponent is dead with a coup de grace. They have no honor, no sense of fair play, and exploit any weaknesses.

SIERONA

As the only true demon in the ranks of Lolth's Hand of Vengeance, Sierona is arrogant and imperious in her relations with the rest. She views herself as the leader—at least when Jaggedra is not nearby. The others do not care for her, but tolerate her for her usefulness and work to get her into position to make sneak attacks.

If left to her own devices, Sierona would fall into activities centered around her demonic nature: the temptation and corruption of mortals, particularly males. She despises mortals and delights in seeing them drained of all energy, lying helpless before her. When the group fights such foes, she usually asks that at least one be spared so that she can take him away and torture him for weeks to come (until she gets bored, forgets to look in on him, and he dies).

Tactics: Before battle, Sierona uses her Use Magic Device skill to activate her *wand of cat's grace*. With an average roll, she gains a +2 bonus to AC (24 total), Reflex saves (+14 total), and

SIERONA

Female Succubus, Rog6: CR 16; Medium-size Outsider (chaotic, evil) (5 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 6d8+6d6+24; hp 75; Init +6; Spd 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (avg); AC 22 (+2 Dex, +9 natural, *+1 ring of protection*); Atk +12 melee (1d3+1, 2 claws), +13/+8 ranged (1d8+1, mighty masterwork longbow); SA spell-like abilities, energy drain, summon tanar'ri, sneak attack +3d6; SQ damage reduction 20/+2, tanar'ri qualities, alternate form, tongues, evasion, uncanny dodge; SR 12; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +12, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 20.

Skills: Bluff +17, Concentration +8, Disable Device +9, Disguise +17 (while using her alternate form ability, she gains a +10 circumstance bonus for a total of +27), Escape Artist +8, Hide +14, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Listen +21, Move Silently +14, Open Lock +12, Ride +7, Search +15, Spot +21, Use Magic Device +14.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Finesse (claws).

Spell-like Abilities: At will—*charm monster, clairaudience/clairvoyance, darkness, desecrate, detect good, detect thoughts, doom, ethereal jaunt* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only), *suggestion,* and *teleport without error* (self plus 50 pounds of objects only); 1/day—*unholy blight.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 12th-level sorcerer (save DC 15+spell level).

Energy Drain (Su): A succubus drains energy from a mortal it lures into some act of passion, or by simply planting a kiss on the victim. If the target is not willing to be kissed, the succubus must start a grapple, which provokes an attack of opportunity. The succubus's kiss or embrace inflicts one negative level; the victim must succeed at a Wisdom check (DC 15) to even notice. The Fortitude save to remove the negative level has a DC of 18.

Summon Tanar'ri (Sp): Once per day, a succubus can attempt to summon one balor with a 10% chance of success.

Alternate Form (Su): Succubi can assume any humanoid form of Small to Large size as a standard action. This ability is similar to the *polymorph self* spell but allows only humanoid forms.

Tongues (Su): A succubus has a permanent *tongues* ability as the spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. Succubi usually use verbal communication with mortals and save telepathic communication for conversing with other fiends.

Tanar'ri qualities:

Immunities (Ex): Tanar'ri are immune to poison and electricity.

Resistances (Ex): Tanar'ri have cold, fire, and acid resistance 20.

Telepathy (Su): Tanar'ri can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

Possessions: *+1 ring of protection, wand of cat's grace* (25 charges), *wand of cure moderate wounds* (25 charges), *ring of invisibility, amulet of proof against detection and location.*

PHAUMAN

Male drow Ftr9/Wiz5: CR 15; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 6 in. tall); HD 5d4+9d10+14; hp 66; Init +9; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (*+2 amulet of natural armor*, +6 Dex, +1 *ioun stone*, +1 buckler); Atk +20/+16 melee (1d6+6, +2 rapier), +18 ranged (1d4, masterwork hand crossbow); SA spells, spell-like abilities; SQ immune to sleep, +2 to Will saves versus spells and spell-like abilities (+4 versus Enchantment spells or effects), darkvision (120 ft.), light blindness; SR 26; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +6; Str 15, Dex 22, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 9, Cha 11.

Skills: Alchemy +11, Climb +11, Concentration +9, Jump +11, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Listen +5, Scry +11, Spellcraft +11, Spot +6, Tumble +11

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow), Expertise, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Scribe Scroll, Weapon Finesse (rapier), Weapon Focus (rapier), Weapon Specialization (rapier).

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness,* and *faerie fire.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 14th-level sorcerer.

Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to all attack rolls, saves, and checks while operating in bright light.

Spells (4/4/3/2): 0—*detect magic, disrupt undead, mage hand, read magic;* 1st—*mage armor, magic missile, shield, true strike;* 2nd—*bull's strength, endurance, invisibility;* 3rd—*displacement, haste.*

Spellbook: 0—all; 1st—*identify, mage armor, magic missile, shield, spider climb, true strike;* 2nd—*bull's strength, blur, cat's grace, endurance, invisibility;* 3rd—*displacement, haste, fly.*

Possessions: *+2 rapier, +2 amulet of natural armor, ioun stones* (dusty rose prism, deep red sphere, vibrant purple that stores *haste* and *fly*), *potion of spider climb, potion of blur, potion of cat's grace,* scroll of *displacement,* scroll of *invisibility,* scroll of *mage armor,* 5 doses of giant wasp poison (1d6 Dex/1d6 Dex, DC 18), masterwork hand crossbow with 12 bolts, masterwork buckler.

VINTER

Male drider Clr14: CR 15; Large Aberration (8 ft. long); HD 14d8+42; hp 115; Init +2; Spd 30 ft, Climb 15 ft.; AC 27 (-1 size, +3 dex, +6 natural, +6 *breastplate,* +3 *shield*); Atk +15/+10 melee (1d8+5, *+2 mace*) and +8 melee (1d4+1, bite), +15/+10 ranged (1d6+2, +2 short bow); Face/Reach: 10 ft. × 10 ft./5ft.; SA poison, spells, spell-like abilities; SR 14; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +14; Str 17, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 20, Cha 16.

Skills: Climb +11, Concentration +18, Hide +10, Listen +15, Move Silently +8, Spellcraft +10, Spot +11.

Feats: Combat Casting, Dodge, Lightning Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

Spell-Like Abilities (Sp): 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness, detect chaos, detect evil, detect good, detect law, detect magic, faerie fire,* and *levitate.* Once per day, Vinter can use *clairaudience/clairvoyance, discern lies, dispel magic,* and *suggestion.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 6th-level sorcerer (save DC 13 + spell level).

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude save (DC 16), initial and secondary damage 1d6 temporary Strength.

Spells (6/7+1/6+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/3+1/2+1): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance, read magic, resistance, virtue;* 1st—*bless, command, cure light wounds, divine favor, doom, protection from good, protection from law*, shield of faith;* 2nd—*bull's strength, endurance, hold person, resist elements, shatter*, silence, sound burst;* 3rd—*blindness/deafness, contagion*, cure serious wounds, dispel magic, invisibility purge, protection from elements;* 4th—*chaos hammer*, cure critical wounds* (x2), *divine power, greater magic weapon, restoration;* 5th—*circle of doom*, dispel good, flame strike, greater command, spell resistance;* 6th—*blade barrier, harm*, heal, summon monster VI;* 7th—*blasphemy, destruction, disintegrate**.

*Domain Spells.

Domains: Chaos (casts Chaos spells at +1 caster level); Destruction (1×/day can smite for +4 attack and +14 damage on an attack roll).

Possessions: *+2 spell-storing mace* (currently stores *inflict serious wounds*), *+2 shortbow, +1 breastplate, +1 large steel shield, periapt of wisdom* (+2), *ring of feather falling,* 3 *beads of force.*

Dexterity-based skills, as well as an attack bonus with her claws (+14 total). She uses *clairvoyance/clairaudience* to scope out the location of the attack beforehand as well, telling the others what she sees and giving them advice and even orders.

Sierona uses her wings, *teleport without error,* and *ethereal jaunt* abilities to get herself (invisibly if possible) into a position to make a sneak attack. Lolth has granted her the ability to drain energy with but a touch of her hand. Thus, she makes sneak attacks with her claws, hoping to drain energy as well as inflict damage. With all of her special movement capabilities, she tries to stay very mobile.

In battle, she uses her telepathic abilities to communicate where she is to her allies so that she can coordinate actions. She also occasionally relays information from one team member to another in this way, but she resents being a "messenger."

Sierona never attempts to summon a balor. It just isn't her style. If she becomes desperate, she *teleports* away instead.

Design Notes: Sierona's CR has been increased by one because her energy drain ability has changed and she has more magic equipment than normal.

PHAUMAN

Confident and chaotic, Phauman is probably the least cooperative member of the Hand of Vengeance. He uses his abilities to help himself and no one else. He fancies himself a desirable and formidable lover among the drow women in the Demonweb, but he is actually a cruel and heartless boor that abuses those weaker than him and lies to those more powerful. He occasionally insinuates that he and Jaggedra are lovers, which is a lie that she would probably kill him for if she heard it.

Phauman is a wizard that uses his spells almost solely to augment his fighting capabilities. He is not interested in grandiose, showy spells like *fireball,* believing them to have no finesse or style.

Tactics: Phauman doesn't make a move without first casting *mage armor* (giving him AC 24), *bull's strength* (with an average roll, this increases his attack bonuses, damage, and Strength-based skills by +2), and *endurance* (with an average roll, this increases his hit

KRAD

Half-fiend dragonne: CR 12; Huge Outsider (20 ft. long); HD 18d10+108; hp 220; Init +7; Spd 40 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor); AC 24 (-2 size, +11 natural +3 Dex, +2 armband); Atk +25 melee (2d8+12, bite) and +20 melee (2d6+6, 2 claws); Face/Reach 10 ft. × 20 ft./10 ft.; SA roar, spell-like abilities; SQ acid, cold, electricity, and fire resistance (20), immune to poison; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +9, Will +12; Str 35, Dex 17, Con 23, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Appraise +18, Concentration +24, Intimidate +20, Listen +21, Move Silently +21, Spellcraft +16, Spot +21, Search +18. Krad speaks Undercommon and Common (as well as Draconic).

Feats: Blind-fight, Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack.

Roar (Su): A dragonne can loose a terrifying roar every 1d4 rounds. All creatures (except dragonnes) within 120 feet must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or be weakened with fear, losing half their current Strength scores for 2d6 rounds. Those within 30 feet become deafened for 2d6 rounds: Creatures with 8 or fewer HD get no saving throw, but others can negate the effect with a successful Fortitude save (DC 15). Deafened creatures cannot be affected again by the dragonne's roar.

Spell-like abilities (Sp): 3/day—*darkness, poison, unholy aura;* 1/day—*desecrate, unholy blight, contagion, blasphemy, unhallow, horrid wilting,* and *summon monster IX* (fiends only).

Possessions: *+2 armband of protection* (as ring), *+4 collar of strength* (as belt).

points by 14 and his Fortitude save by +1). Vinter usually casts *resist elements* (fire) on him before they go into battle.

Before combat, Phauman also casts *shield* (AC 31 and +3 to Reflex saves), *invisibility, displacement,* and *haste.* Once in battle, he uses *true strike* against a well-defended foe (5% spell failure chance because he uses a buckler) but mostly he just makes as many attacks in his hasted state as he can with his poisoned blade. In situations where range is a factor, he uses poisoned crossbow bolts, although he doesn't hesitate to fall back on *magic missile.*

VINTER

Originally, all of the members of the Hand of Vengeance rebelled at Vinter's presence based on his status as a drider—often thought of as "cursed," by the drow and other inhabitants of the Demonweb. That position has changed. As the newest member, he has gained the begrudging respect of the others, as well as put himself in a position where they must rely on him for healing and support spells. Now the others will sometimes go out of their way to protect Vinter as he remains in the back and casts spells.

Tactics: Before battle, Vinter casts *endurance* (an average roll gives him 14 more hit points and a +1 bonus to Fortitude saves and Concentration checks), *dispel good* (AC 31 plus offensive capabilities) *protection from elements* (usually fire), and *spell resistance* on himself (increasing his SR to 26). In his role as "support," Vinter casts *resist elements* (usually fire) on Phauman, *bull's strength* on Berkurt, and *bless* on everyone. He attacks foes with *destruction, disintegrate, blasphemy, flame strike, blade barrier,* and *greater command.*

If forced into melee, Vinter casts *divine power* on himself (and *divine favor* if there's time) and uses his smite ability and the *inflict serious wounds* stored in his mace immediately. *Divine power* makes his attack bonuses with his mace +20/+15/+10, increases his damage and Strength-based skills by +1, and gives him 14 more hit points. If his first swing (attack bonus +24 total with the smite) with the mace hits, he inflicts 4d8+34 points of damage.

KRAD

Krad was raised and nurtured by priestesses of Lolth in the Demonweb, and fed magic elixirs so he would grow particularly large and strong. Surprisingly intelligent, this tough, half-demon dragonne serves as one of the Hand of Vengeance's central melee combatants as well as a flying mount for both Phauman and Vinter, or Berkurt alone. Unlike most of his kind, his scales and mane are dark, rather than golden in color.

Krad is greedy and materialistic, interested in accumulating a vast hoard like a dragon. Rumor has it that he has started such an accumulation of wealth somewhere in the strands of the Demonweb.

Tactics: Krad is very straightforward and doesn't hesitate to swoop into battle and attack, although if attacking with surprise he uses *horrid wilting, blasphemy,* or *unholy blight* to weaken his foes at range before he gets there (*horrid wilting,* inflicting 18d8 damage, is the best choice unless the targets are undead or otherwise immune).

Design Note: Krad's CR has been increased not only due to the increase in size and his half-fiend nature, but because he has useful magic items beyond the sort of treasure a dragonne would normally use.

BERKURT THE CORRUPTOR

A fiendish stone giant, Berkurt is thoroughly evil and vile in his pursuits. He enjoys inflicting pain and spreading misery wherever he goes, crushing those weaker than him simply because he can. He angers easily and flies into bloody rages all the time. The rest of the Hand of Vengeance has simply learned not to get him angry, although a *suggestion* from Sierona usually can calm him if need be.

Berkurt's favorite team member is Krad. He does not understand or care for spellcasting, although he appreciates those spells that obviously help him—particularly a well-timed heal from Vinter.

Tactics: Vinter usually casts *bull's strength* on Berkurt well ahead of time; with an average roll, this gives him an attack bonus of +21/+16 with his sword and an additional +1 to all damage and Strength-based skills. Berkurt wades into battle with his unholy sword quickly, and he possesses a great love of gore, pain, and death.

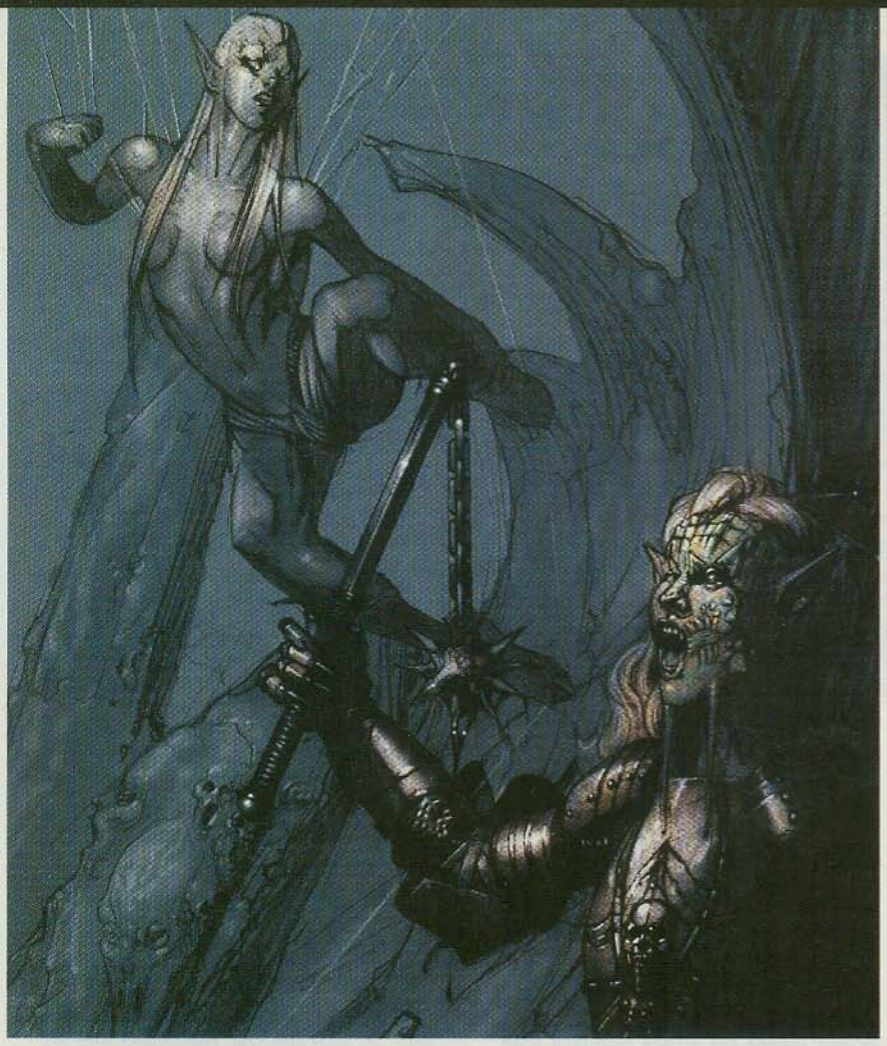
BERKURT THE CORRUPTOR

Fiendish stone giant: CR 10; Large Giant (13 ft. tall); HD 14d8+70; hp 134; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 28 (-1 size, +2 Dex, +11 natural, +6 breastplate); Atk +20/+15 melee (2d8+13, *+1 huge greatsword*) or +12/+7 ranged (2d8+10, rock); Face/Reach 5 ft. × 5 ft./10 ft.; SA rock throwing, smite good (+14 damage on one attack per day); SQ rock catching, cold and fire resistance (20), damage reduction 10/+3; SR 25; AL CE; SV Fort +14, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 30, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +9, Hide +0 (+8 in rocky terrain), Jump +9, Spot +4

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot.

Possessions: *+1 unholy huge greatsword,* masterwork breastplate.



JAGGEDRA THUL

Lolth's favored avenger is a priestess that has served her for hundreds of years. Born the daughter of a powerful priestess and a black dragon in drow form, Jaggedra served her goddess for many years, rising quickly through the ranks and eventually assassinating her own mother to attain the position of high priestess in a major Underdark temple. She found a powerful and like-minded mate in a drow vampire named Zachean. Zachean eventually betrayed and slew Jaggedra to get at a powerful magic item, but direct intervention by the Queen of the Spiders allowed Jaggedra to rise as a vampire herself (normally, a half-dragon cannot be afflicted with vampirism). Jaggedra joined her mistress in the Abyss and has lived there ever since.

As a vampiric, half-dragon cleric, Jaggedra has a wide variety of abilities at her command. She is also well-armed with magic items, most of which she fashioned herself. Jaggedra only occasionally associates with the rest of the Hand of Vengeance and works with them only when the task is of the utmost importance. She sometimes carries out missions alone, but she

JAGGEDRA THUL

Female vampiric drow half-dragon (black) Clr17: CR 22; Medium-size Undead (5 ft., 9 in. tall); HD 17d12; hp 114; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 36 (+5 full plate +10 natural, +2 ring of protection, +1 Dex); Atk +23/+18/+13 melee (1d10+16, *+2 heavy flail*) or +20 melee (1d6+9 bite) and +15 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws), +14 ranged (1d6+1, +1 light crossbow); SA acid breath, blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, domination, energy drain, spell-like abilities, spells; SQ cold and electricity resistance (20), damage reduction 15/+1, darkvision (120 feet), acid immunity, +4 turn resistance, +2 to Will saves vs. spells and spell-like abilities (+4 versus Enchantment spells or effects), undead immunities, *gaseous form, spider climb,* alternate form, fast healing, light blindness; SR 29; AL CE; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +16; Str 29, Dex 20, Con –, Int 19, Wis 22, Cha 21.

Skills: Bluff +18, Concentration +20, Hide +20, Knowledge (Religion) +14, Listen +26, Move Silently +15, Spellcraft +14, Spot +26.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Dodge, Forge Ring, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Martial Weapon Proficiency (heavy flail), Power Attack, Weapon Focus (heavy flail).

Spell-like Abilities (Sp): 1/day—*dancing lights, darkness,* and *faerie fire.* These abilities are as the spells cast by a 17th-level sorcerer.

Acid Breath (Ex): Once per day, Jaggedra can breathe a line of acid 5 ft. high, 5 ft. wide, and 60 ft. long that inflicts 6d4 points of damage (Reflex save DC 17 for half).

Domination (Su): A vampire can crush an opponent's will just by looking into his or her eyes. This is similar to a gaze attack, except that the vampire must take a standard action, and those merely looking at it are not affected. Anyone the vampire targets must succeed at a Will save (DC 23) or fall instantly under the vampire's influence as though by a *dominate person* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer. The ability has a range of 30 feet.

Energy Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by a vampire's slam attack suffer two negative levels.

Blood Drain (Ex): A vampire can suck blood from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains blood, inflicting 1d4 points of permanent Constitution drain each round the pin is maintained.

Children of the Night (Su): Vampires command the lesser creatures of the world and once per day can call forth a pack of 4d8 dire rats, a swarm of 10d10 bats, or a pack of 3d6 wolves as a standard action. These creatures arrive in 2d6 rounds and serve the vampire for up to 1 hour.

Create Spawn (Su): A humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by a vampire's energy drain attack rises as a vampire spawn (see the vampire spawn entry on page 182 of the *Monster Manual*) 1d4 days after burial.

If the vampire instead drains the victim's Constitution to 0 or less, the victim returns as a spawn if it had 4 or fewer HD

most often operates as a liaison between Lolth and the other members of the Hand.

Tactics: Jaggedra fights on her own terms, or she leaves immediately to prepare, using *word of recall, ethereal jaunt,* or *gaseous form.* She enters combat with the following spells cast: *divine favor* (makes her total bonus with her flail +28/+23/+18, inflicting 1d10+21 damage), *shield of faith* (grants +4 deflection, but only +2 of that stacks with her ring, for a total AC of 38), *invisibility, freedom of movement, non-detection, bane weapon* (usually elves unless another choice is more obvious), *true seeing, spell immunity* (*magic missile, fireball, searing light, halt undead*), *dispel good,* and *unholy aura.* If she is with the other members of the Hand of Vengeance, they all benefit from the affects of the *unholy aura.* The *unholy aura* also grants an additional +4 deflection bonus to AC, which does not stack with her other spells but ensures that she maintains a high Armor Class if some of her spells are dispelled; it also adds +4 to her saves (Fort +14, Ref +12, Will +20).

Jaggedra always starts off any attack with *implosion,* followed by a pair of *destructions.* She then wades into melee, using Power Attack to maximize the damage she inflicts. If hard-pressed, she might use *miracle* to bring back fallen allies and restore the Hand of Vengeance to fight alongside her. Otherwise, she keeps it as a fallback means of complete escape.

Jaggedra has the following new spell (though Vinter could potentially use this spell as well).

BANE WEAPON
Transmutation
Level: Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: One weapon or 50 projectiles, all of which must be in contact with each other at the time of casting.
Duration: 10 minutes/level
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless, object)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless, object)

This spell makes a weapon more potent against a particular type of creature. At the time of casting, a creature type must be chosen from the list below:

- Aberrations
- Animals
- Beasts
- Constructs
- Dragons
- Elementals
- Fey
- Giants
- Humanoids (must choose subtype)
- Magical beasts
- Monstrous humanoids
- Oozes
- Outsiders, chaotic
- Outsiders, evil
- Outsiders, good
- Outsiders, lawful
- Plants
- Shapechangers
- Undead
- Vermin

Against its designated foe, the weapon's effective enhancement bonus is +2 better than its normal enhancement bonus (so a +1 longsword is a +3 longsword against its foe). Further, it deals +2d6 points of bonus damage against the foe.

and as a vampire if it had 5 or more HD. In either case, the new vampire or spawn is under the command of the vampire that created it and remains enslaved until its master's death.

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Gaseous Form (Su): As a standard action, a vampire can assume *gaseous form* at will, as the spell cast by a 5th-level sorcerer, but can remain gaseous indefinitely and has a fly speed of 20 feet with perfect maneuverability.

Spider Climb (Ex): A vampire can climb sheer surfaces as though with a *spider climb* spell.

Alternate Form (Su): A vampire can assume the shape of a bat, dire bat, wolf, or dire wolf as a standard action. This ability is similar to a *polymorph self* spell cast by a 12th-level sorcerer, except that the vampire can assume only one of the forms listed here. It can remain in that form until it assumes another or until the next sunrise.

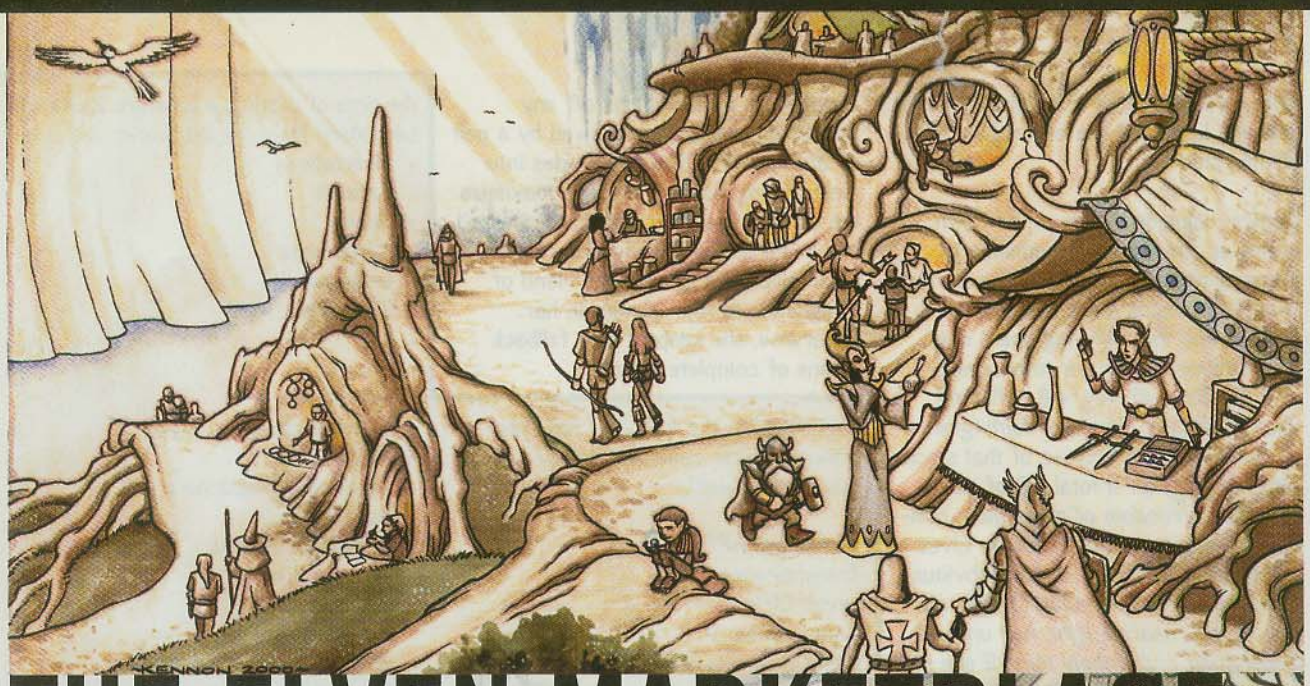
Fast Healing (Ex): A vampire heals 5 points of damage each round so long as it has at least 1 hit point. If reduced to 0 hit points or lower, a vampire automatically assumes *gaseous form* and attempts to escape. It must reach its coffin home within 2 hours or be utterly destroyed. (It can travel up to nine miles in 2 hours.) Once at rest in its coffin, it rises to 1 hit point after 1 hour, then resumes healing at the rate of 5 hit points per round.

Light Blindness (Ex): Abrupt exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) blinds drow for 1 round. In addition, they suffer a -1 circumstance penalty to all attack rolls, saves, and checks while operating in bright light.

Spells (6/7+1/7+1/6+1/6+1/5+1/5+1/3+1/2+1/1+1): 0—*detect magic, cure minor wounds, guidance* (×3), *resistance;* 1st—*bless, divine favor* (×2), *doom, inflict light wounds*, obscuring mist, protection from good, shield of faith;* 2nd—*death knell, desecrate, hold person* (×2), *invisibility*, silence* (×2), *sound burst;* 3rd—*bestow curse, blindness/deafness, deeper darkness, dispel magic* (×2), *nondetection*, protection from elements;* 4th—*bane weapon, confusion*, cure critical wounds, divine power, freedom of movement, summon monster IV, spell immunity;* 5th—*circle of doom*, dispel good, ethereal jaunt, slay living, true seeing, wall of stone;* 6th—*banishment, blade barrier, harm*; word of recall;* 7th—*blasphemy, destruction* (×2), *disintegrate*;* 8th—*fire storm, polymorph any object*, unholy aura;* 9th—*implosion*, miracle.*

*Domain Spells. Domains: Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills); Destruction (1×/day can smite for +4 attack and +17 damage).

Possessions: *+2 acidic burst unholy flail* (deals +1d6 additional acid damage per strike, +2d6 acidic damage on critical, plus unholy damage), *+5 ghost touch full plate, ring of spell turning, +2 ring of protection, +1 light crossbow.*



THE ELVEN MARKETPLACE

When the Going Gets Tough, the Elves Go Shopping

by Stephen Kenson • illustrated by Kennon James

"Bah!" Tordek said, hefting the light, thin shirt of elven mail in one fist, waving it about as if it were made of sackcloth. "You call this armor? My baby blankets were heavier than this! T'wouldn't stop a sling stone, much less and arrow or a blade!"

"Don't underestimate the work of our craftsmen," Mialee said softly, a faint smile on her lips. "The secrets of forging elven mail have been passed down for millennia."

"Well you're welcome to keep it," the dwarf said sourly. He put down the mail and picked up one of the slim arrows from the leather quiver lying on the table. They were fletched with eagle feathers and tipped with stone points rather than iron or steel.

"Stone arrowheads! By Moradin's beard, woman, is this another 'ancient elven secret'? How to make arrowhead's that'll shatter against the first armor they strike?"

"Actually it's . . ." Mialee began, but then Tordek slammed the point of the arrowhead into a plate of his own armor and the elven wizard quickly moved to cover her ears. The stone shattered with a clap like thunder and Tordek sputtered in surprise, dropping the arrow and clapping his hands over his ears.

"Ow!" he cried.

"Actually it's a fairly new idea," Mialee continued. "It's proven quite a surprise." But Tordek couldn't hear the elf's explanation or her bell-like laughter as he shook his head and tried to get the ringing noise out of his ears. Perhaps the elves were more clever than he thought . . .

The equipment lists in the *Player's Handbook* describe the sorts of things characters are likely to find in major cities and towns in their world—that is to say, human cities and towns. In the forest strongholds of the elves, the equipment available is somewhat different.

When creating an elven character, or the next time the party passes through an elven community, consider introducing some of these new items—your players might end up as surprised as Tordek.

WEAPONS

Elves tend to favor Small and Medium-size melee weapons. The larger weapons used by humans and half-orcs are too unwieldy in the often close-quarters of elven woods.

Elven fighting styles favor speed and agility over physical power; the feat Weapon Finesse is common among elves, so they prefer lighter weapons that take advantage of their natural Dexterity.

For ranged combat, the ultimate elven weapon is, of course, the longbow, although elves are often proficient in the shortbow as well. Elves tend to disdain the crossbow as cumbersome compared to the elegance of a finely crafted elven bow. In addition to masterwork and magic arrows, elves have a variety of other ammunition:

Blunt Arrow: These masterwork arrows have specially crafted wooden tips. They cause subdual damage instead of normal damage.

Flight Arrow: The light shaft and special design of this masterwork arrow increases a bow's range increment by 25 feet.

Signal Arrow: This masterwork arrow is specially designed to emulate a bird's call when fired. Elven fletchers craft the arrows to make calls that will be recognized as signals by the elves of the community. For example, a hawk's cry might be used to signal an attack, and an owl's cry might be used to signal a stealthy advance. A successful Wilderness Lore check (DC 20) can be made to determine whether the birdcall comes from a bird or another source. The intricate carving of the arrows makes them clumsy in flight, resulting in a -2 penalty if they're used to attack.

Smoke Arrow: The arrow is essentially a smokestick (*Player's Handbook*, p. 114) in the shape of an arrow that can be ignited and fired from a bow. It trails smoke behind and creates a cloud of smoke in a 10-foot cube where it strikes, but the arrow deals no damage. The smoke dissipates normally. Smoke arrows provide excellent concealment for elven warriors, allowing them to make quick raids or retreats.

Thunder Arrow: Thunder arrows have thunderstones (*Player's Handbook*, p. 114) at their tip. A direct hit inflicts no damage but does trigger the thunderstone's sonic attack. Misses should be treated as an attack with a grenade-like weapon (*Player's Handbook*, p. 138).

Weapon	Cost	Critical	Range Increment	Weight (per 20)	Type
Blunt arrow	10 gp	20	–	3 lb.	Bludgeoning
Flight arrow	10 gp	20	+20 ft.	2 lb.	Piercing
Signal arrow	10 gp	20	–	3 lb.	Piercing
Smoke arrow	25 gp	–	-10 ft.	4 lb.	–
Thunder arrow	35 gp	–	-20 ft.	6 lb.	–

ARMOR

Elves prefer light armor since they must be able to move quickly and quietly through their forest homes. Armor that slows them down or interferes with their natural grace is frowned upon. Thus, elves rarely make or wear heavy armor, and they prefer small shields or bucklers. Elves tend to wear leather armor, chain shirts, or armor of their own design:

Leaf Armor: Elven artisans weave suits of armor from forest leaves, which are then treated by a special alchemical process that makes them as tough and flexible as leather, with considerably less weight and encumbrance. Such suits are made in both "springtime" and "autumn" styles. Springtime leaf armor is vivid green while autumn leaf armor is made up of red, orange, and yellow leaves.

Spell failure chances for armors made from these treated leaves are decreased by 5%, maximum Dexterity bonus is increased by one, and armor check penalties are decreased by two. Note that armors that are primarily constructed of metal are not meaningfully affected.

Wooden Armor: Similar to leaf armor, wooden armor is made of carefully cured and beautifully carved pieces of darkwood (see p. 243 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*), supplemented by alchemically treated leaves.

Spell failure chances for armors made from this treated wood are decreased by 5%, maximum Dexterity bonus is increased by one, and armor check penalties are decreased by two. Most wooden armors are one category lighter than normal for purposes of movement and other limitations (for example, whether a barbarian can use her fast movement ability while wearing armor or not). Heavy armors are treated as medium, and medium armors are treated as light, but light armors are still treated as light. Note that armors that are not primarily constructed of metal are not meaningfully affected.

Item	Market Price Modifier
Leaf Armor	+750 gp
Light Wooden Armor	+750 gp
Medium Wooden Armor	+2,250 gp
Heavy Wooden Armor	+6,000 gp

The sight of leaf armor has led many to fatally underestimate an opponent.

CLOTHING

Elves have a fondness for fine clothing, and they know how to weave many types of cloth from natural materials; elven silks are highly prized by merchants. Elves also have many techniques for dying, cutting, and stitching cloth to make fine garments. Such clothing can command high prices.

Starlight Cloth: This silken fabric of a dark color (forest green, midnight blue, and so on) is shot through with silvery threads that seems to catch and reflect light, making the cloth look as though it were dappled with hundreds of tiny silver stars. Starlight cloth seems to shimmer and glow faintly in moonlight or starlight. It's a popular material for elven cloaks and gowns for formal occasions.

Item	Cost	Weight
Starlight cloth outfit	100 gp	5 lb.

Item	Cost	Weight
Masking perfume	100 gp	*
Star Lantern	100 gp	2 lb.
Elven Instrument	100 gp	3 lb.
Forest Camouflage Kit, Masterwork	50 gp	8 lb.

*No weight worth noting.

SPECIAL & SUPERIOR ITEMS

Most large elven communities are capable of making masterwork items. Some special elven items are given here as examples:

Masking Perfume: This alchemical formula helps to mask the natural scent of anyone wearing it for up to 3 hours. Creatures with the Scent quality can't detect the wearer by scent until he is within 5 feet. Masking perfume also eliminates the tracking bonus the creature normally gains to track the character (see the *Monster Manual* for details). A small bottle contains five applications of masking perfume (each enough for one Medium-size character).

Star Lantern: A decorative lantern made of carved wood or (less often) delicately worked metal, this lantern contains a small crystal treated to produce light that illuminates a 10-foot radius for 12 hours. Elves commonly use star lanterns for decoration or to provide soft lighting in a dark forest area sufficient for their vision.

Elven Instruments: Their love of music leads elves to create some of the finest musical instruments found anywhere. Popular elven instruments are the harp, lyre, and the flute. Most elven instruments are masterwork items (see p. 111 in the *Player's Handbook*), granting a +2 circumstance bonus to Perform checks.

Forest Camouflage Kit, Masterwork: This is a special set of clothing and body paints that many elven hunters and warriors use when patrolling in their forest homes. This is the perfect tool for blending in with such environments, and the kit provides the user with a +2 circumstance bonus to Hide checks in the forest. Winter, desert, and underground versions of the camouflage kit have been created by elves for use in such settings. D

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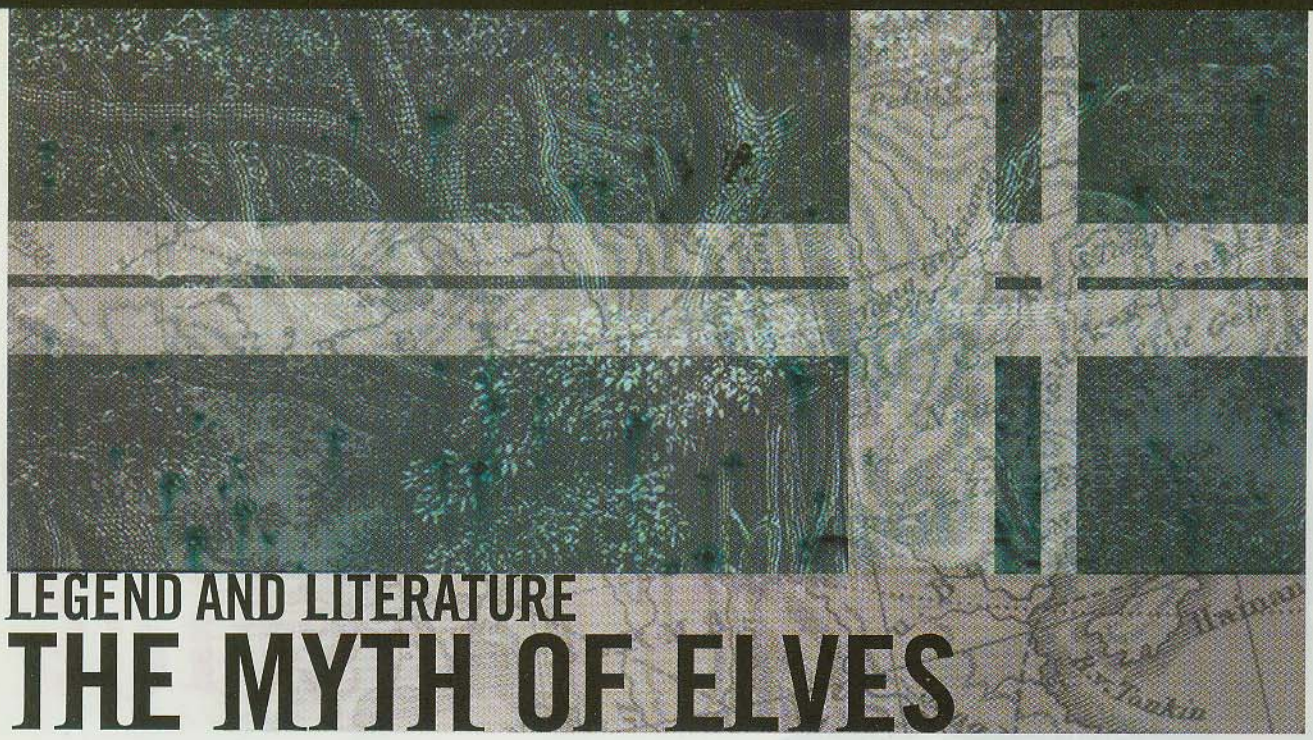

LEGEND AND LITERATURE

THE MYTH OF ELVES

by Kenneth Hite

With their near-omnipresence in fantasy fiction and gaming, the elves are paradoxically in danger. Not from their traditional doom of fading away into nothingness, but from fading into over-familiar, cardboard clichés. Elves have become victims of their own success. They've lost much of their connection with the supernatural. As we know them now, elves are just a tall, long-lived, beautiful branch of the "fair folk." A brief tour through the forests of legend and history can point out any number of different paths for you to explore to keep your elves alive by keeping them real.

"There are many magnificent dwellings. One is there called Alfheim. There dwell the folk that are called light-elves; but the dark-elves dwell down in the earth, and they are unlike the light-elves in appearance, but much more so in deeds. The light-elves are fairer than the sun to look upon, but the dark-elves are blacker than pitch."

—Snorri Sturlusson,
The Prose Edda

The word "elf" comes from the Anglo-Saxon "aelf," which in turn derives from the Old Norse "álfr" and/or the Old High German "alp." The closest anyone has come to tracing the word back to a meaning other than "elf" is a possible connection to an Indo-European root meaning "white" (which would also connect it with the Latin "albus"). If this connection is accurate, the "light-elves" of the Norse edda would be the default type, and our slender, beautiful elves of fantasy represent something not terribly far from the original notion behind the word.

Medieval peasants weren't too terribly clear on the origin of the elves, either: They were variously thought to be the earlier inhabitants of the land displaced by the coming of men, the spirits of the dead, angels who supported neither Lucifer nor God, or spirits of the air and trees. The actual origin of the myths and legends of elves probably stems from many of these same roots: The association of elves with white connects them to Celtic rituals of the dead as well as to Christian descriptions of angels. A belief in nature spirits as beautiful but clearly inhuman is nearly worldwide and seems to be a natural response to the stresses and stimuli of an early agricultural or hunter-gatherer economy. Although modern anthropology stresses other factors, it's not impossible that the early Teutonic and Celtic invaders of Scandinavia and the British Isles might not have felt the same combination of romance and fear toward the original inhabitants as the European settlers of North America felt toward the Native Americans: a romance and fear that became the emotional core of the elf-legends.

"In olde dayes of the King Artour,
Of which that Bretons speken gret honour,
All was this lond ful filled of faerie;
The Elf-quene with her joly compagnie,
Danced ful oft in many a grene mede.
This was the old opinion as I rede;
I speke of many hundred yeres ago.
But now can no man see non elves mo,"

—Geoffrey Chaucer,
"The Wife of Bath's Tale,"
The Canterbury Tales

Elves slip in and out of the forests of legend and folklore with the same

maddening subtlety and craft they display in the tales themselves. At the beginning stages, the various types of supernatural races intermingled easily. Elves, trolls, and dwarves shared similar features, weaknesses, and natures. Eventually, with more sophisticated storytelling in the form of bards and skalds, the races separated. Separation followed the division between "dark" and "light" that split the fair elves from the goblins or dwarves: that between "wild" and "domestic" elves. Domestic elves became brownies, and the wild elves became (among other things) our familiar tall, enigmatic "High Elves." The Norse invasions of Scotland split the High Elves into "dark" and "light" again, in the form of the Unseelie and Seelie Courts.

"Fairies black, grey, green, and white,
You moonshine revellers and shades of night,
You heirs of fixed destiny,
Attend your office and your quality.
Crier Hob-goblin, make the fairy
O-yes. Elves, list your names! Silence, you airy toys!"

—William Shakespeare,
The Merry Wives of Windsor, V:v:37-42

THE VICTORIAN BOOM IN CHILDREN'S STORIES NEARLY DROWNED THE HIGH ELVES IN A SEA OF SENTIMENT AND PIXIE-DUST.

With the Norman Conquest, the Old French "fées" (or "fays") became another term for the High Elves, and a general term (as "fairies") for any supernatural humanoid race besides giants or ogres (who were the "races of Cain"). The word "fées" is a corruption of the late Latin "fatae," meaning "illusionists" or "Fates," and this latter meaning survives in stories such as that of the fairies who grant Sleeping Beauty her future gifts and dooms.

Meanwhile, the Norse invasions of Ireland (and its Christianization) had the effect of pulling its "daoine sidhe" ("people of the mound") into the fairy/elven mainstream, and transferring many specifically Irish mythical traits into British elf-lore via Scotland. (For example, the Irish habit of optimistically referring to the daoine sidhe as "sleagh maith," the Good Folk, became popular in Scotland.) This had the general effect of confusing everything again, and it's probably a misnomer to speak of there being a generally-recognized elven race (as we know them today) in English folklore, despite such tales as Walter Map's "Fairy Wife of Brecknock" (ca. 1180) and the border-ballad "Thomas the Rhymer and the Elf-Queen" (ca. 1450).

Fairies and elves took on whatever form the storyteller required, although they generally stuck to a few specific archetypes, including the tall, beautiful "High Elven" form. The Arthurian romances made their elves and fairies (notably Morgan Le Fay) supernaturally beautiful and magical. Marie de France's *Sir Lanval* (ca. 1190) is the traditional "fairy-bride" story set in an Arthurian context, and in Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's *Lanzelet* (ca. 1200), Sir Lancelot is clearly raised in Fairyland by the Lady of the Lake, who is also Queen of the Elves. Later evolutions of the Arthurian corpus transformed these elves into enchanters or simple queens.

As fairies became less magical and more like noble humans, they became more familiar and comical. Long gone were the days when the elves (even the "bright" ones) demanded blood sacrifices and the removal of dragon-heads from Viking ships. Although the wilder countrysides of Ireland, Scotland, and Wales still told chilling tales of the Troops of the Dead and changelings, English fairies and elves became petty humanlike tyrants or tiny winged sprites. John Lyly's *Endimion* (1591) and William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (1595) firmly set the latter image in the minds of English-speaking audiences, eclipsing the relatively humanlike heroic fairies of Edmund Spenser's Arthurian *Faerie Queene* (1590-1596). Lyly and Shakespeare's gauzy-winged sprites became the standard "fairy," from the nymphs in Michael Drayton's *Nymphidia* (1627) to Tinkerbell in J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1904). House elves took over the word "elf" with their association with Santa Claus and with fairy tales such as Grimm's "The Shoemaker and the Elves" (1812). The Victorian boom in children's stories nearly drowned the High Elves in a sea of sentiment and pixie-dust.

"So they laughed and sang in the trees; and pretty fair nonsense I daresay you think it. Not that they would care; they would only laugh all the more if you told them so. They were elves of course. Soon Bilbo caught glimpses of them as the darkness deepened. He loved elves, though he seldom met them; but he was a little frightened of them, too."

—J.R.R. Tolkien,
The Hobbit

Although Sir Walter Scott had gathered authentic (and grim) tales of High Elves in *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1803), his example was almost completely ignored in literature for the next century. William Butler Yeats gathered his Irish *Fairy and Folk Tales* (1888) and popularized *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), but it took Rudyard Kipling to finally cut through with his dark-humored historical fairy tale collection, *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906), in which the narrator, Puck, pours scorn on saccharin stories about butterfly-winged fairies. Lord Dunsany, meanwhile, updated Spenser with *The King of Elfland's Daughter* (1924), which laid claim to the term "elves" as an alternative to the seemingly permanently infantile "fairies." With Yeats, Kipling, and Dunsany, the material for the recreation of the High Elves was available.

Oxford linguist J.R.R. Tolkien took some of the themes from those works,

and combined them with his own research into the original Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon versions of the elves, to create modern fantasy elves in *The Lord of the Rings* (1954). The same year, Poul Anderson's *The Broken Sword* contained much of the same mythic elven material, with grimmer and more tragic intent. Tolkien purposely emphasized the aristocratic, artistic, and wise aspects of his "Quendi" rather than the callous, cruel, selfish nature of the elves depicted in much of the English and Irish folk tradition. Yeats did much the same thing, for political reasons, although he focused on the alien and "terrible beauty" of the Sidhe in his poetic works. While Yeats's and Tolkien's elves were more authentic (and vastly more interesting) than the turgid treacle of the Edwardian nursery, they still omitted the dark side of the so-called Good Folk. Between Yeats and Tolkien, most fantasy elves have become a sort of vaguely-Celtic, nature-guarding, poetic race of beautiful near-immortals. Occasionally, as with Elizabeth Boyer's *The Sword and the Satchel* (1980) and its sequels, the "good" elves have an "evil" reflection, indicating that post-Tolkien authors have themselves divided the Tolkien-like "good" High Elves into "light" and "dark" varieties. The Tolkien model need not result in cardboard, but many authors seem content to stay within its confines.

BETWEEN YEATS AND TOLKIEN, MOST FANTASY ELVES HAVE BECOME VAGUELY-CELTIC, NATURE-GUARDING, BEAUTIFUL NEAR-IMMORTALS.

Elven tales set in either our world, such as Emma Bull's *War For the Oaks* (1987) and Charles de Lint's *Moonheart* (1984), often attempt a recreation of authentic elven traditions and Celtic mythology, at least back to Scott and Yeats. Occasionally, a work such as Greg Bear's *Infinity Concerto* (1984) tries to update those stories (along with Spenser's) with new imagery and some success. In terms of capturing the truly alien feel of elven myth, supernatural horror tales from Pamela Dean's *Tam Lin* (1991) to Raymond Feist's *Faerie Tale* (1988) seem to have the edge, although the current champion remains Terry Pratchett's brilliantly, cruelly authentic fantasy novel *Lords and Ladies* (1992).

Despite the drought of imagination in much of mainstream fantasy, there are plenty of trees growing in even the small stretch of Fairyland represented by the Tolkien "high-elven" model. Whether you're a DM or a player, there's lots of unexplored pathways back into the mythic forest in search of the elves you want to put there. Just don't trust the Good Folk, and keep your longbow handy.

DROW

The word "drow" is a variant of the Shetland Islander word "trow," which literally means "troll." In this context, a "troll" is any supernatural humanoid being rather than the breed fitting the *Monster Manual* description. The Shetlanders' drow live inside hollow hills and possess the traditionally mischievous-to-malevolent turn of mind of most northern fair folk. The drow introduced in G3: *Hall of the Fire Giant King* (1978) and later in the classic D series of modules, owe only their names to the Shetland drow. Their personalities stem more from the vile aspects of all the stunted "black elves" from Scandinavian and Celtic legend. Evil elves almost universally dwell underground in legend, either in caves, beneath mountains, or inside hills and burial mounds. Their connection to spiders might be Gygax's coincidental association of elves with the evil Mirkwood spiders from *The Hobbit*, an adaptation of the subterranean spider-cult of Atlach-Nacha from Clark Ashton Smith's dark comic fantasy *The Seven Geases* (1934), or some intentional combination of themes from both. The tiny elves of post-Elizabethan English literature occasionally warred with spiders in whimsical and comic poetry, which might also have helped connect the two. At their core, however, the D&D drow are as fresh a creation as anyone can possibly achieve in the realm of elf-lore.

Recommended Reading List

In addition to the sagas and fiction mentioned in this article, you can find more elven and fairy lore in the following sources:

Briggs, Katharine, *An Encyclopedia of Fairies* (Pantheon, 1976).

Briggs, Katharine, *The Fairies in English Tradition and Literature* (University of Chicago Press, 1967).

Evans-Wentz, W.Y., *The Fairy-Faith in Celtic Countries* (Oxford University Press, 1911).

Grimm, Jakob, *Teutonic Mythology* (Dover, 1966).

Keightley, Thomas, *The Fairy Mythology* (G. Bell, 1878).

Silver, Carole G., *Strange and Secret Peoples: Fairies and Victorian Consciousness* (Oxford University. Press, 1999).

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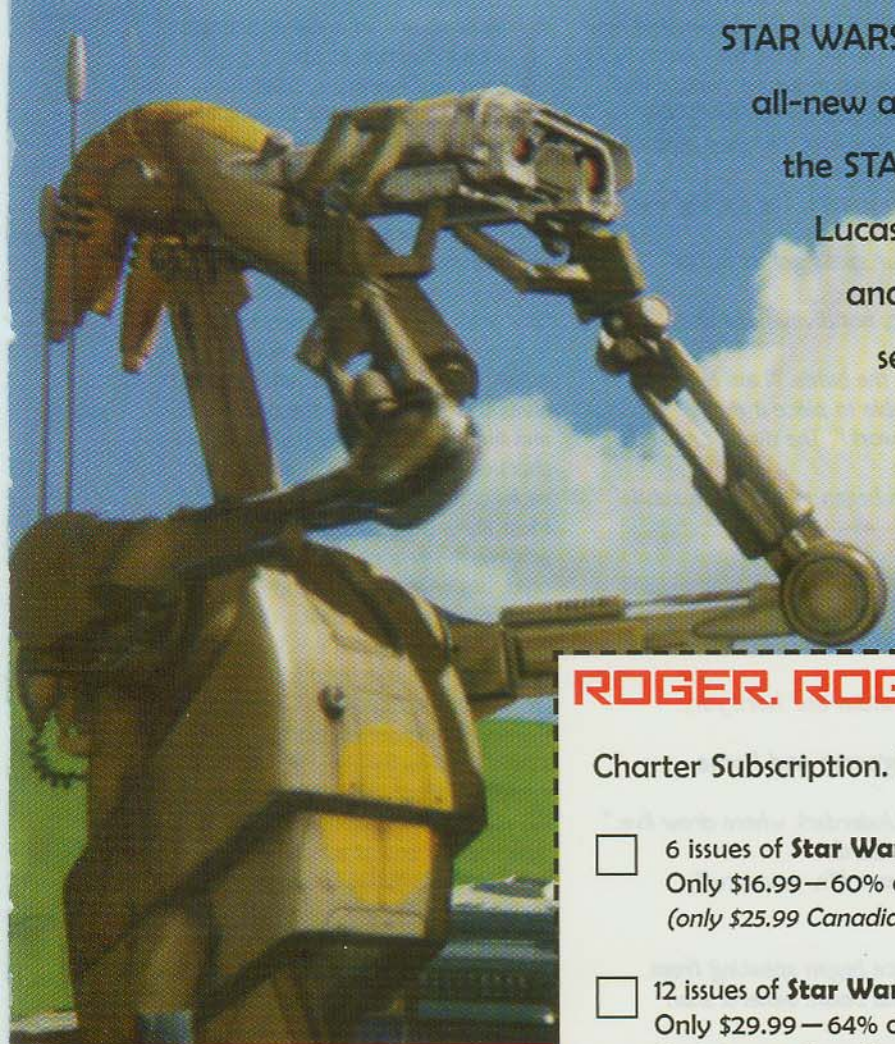

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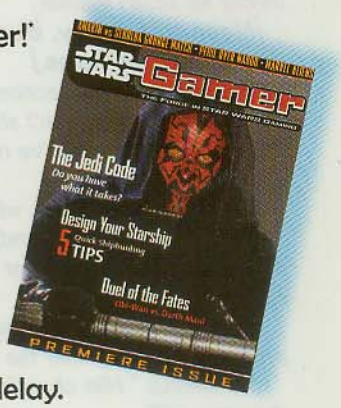

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AN ELVEN LEXICON

by Sean K Reynolds

Hlin was angry. The dwarven wizard was tired of being lost in the forest, and now that they had reached the swamp it was about to get worse. While they were lucky enough to have spotted the secret elven message carved on a tree, Ivellios was the only elf in the group, and the orc ambush had wounded him so badly that he wouldn't wake for days. They couldn't afford to wait that long, but they didn't have any healing.

Garret was picking some mud out of his boots with a knife. The halfling was wearing his typical smug look.

"Seems that we're stuck, are we? Can't any of your spells get us out of this mess?"

The dwarf growled. "You know I studied fire magic, not divinations and translations."

"I can try," said Nokala, who had been silent since the battle. "I am by no means a master at the elven tongue, but I might be able to piece it out."

"Then why did you have us stewing here? Get to work!" The dwarf cracked her knuckles impatiently.

The bard merely stared at Hlin for a moment, then began to study the subtle carvings in the bark.

Daquin, ke'revanthas, ke'hakavarn tham∫

[Danger, friends, orcs near.]

"Its a warning that orcs live nearby."

"How timely of them."

"The rest seem to be directions."

Nodel lath aul noresh, tha ke'ama ar diir sharatam ent heriryar, nevae ke'kesiri ∈enial∫

[Moon tree in day, blue flowers above stone gnome and horse, dark elves' big-home.]

"And this part is directions to an entrance to the Underdark where drow live."

"Feh, drow elves. Can't stand 'em," grumbled the wizard.

Garret laughed. "You've never seen a dark elf in your life, you scruffy scrollbender!"

"Shut up, runt. Nokala, what else does it say?"

Before she could respond, a harmonious elven voice began speaking from the tree. "Rell ke'noresh ent ke'mor nevae ke'kesir, leha belath benerel shan nae morenial"

"It seems I somehow triggered an old message *spell. I believe that was a promise or an oath that the drow would be slain to the last."*

"Ambitious," Hlin chuckled. "I like that. Do you think you can figure where this cave is?"

"I can try."

"Good. I'll carry Ivellios, you lead the way."

The elves are an ancient race with a long tradition of magic, poetry, song, and literature. Their many subraces have found homes in most of the natural parts of the world, including their evil cousins, the drow, who survive in the strange environment of the Underdark. Because of this long history and the varied influence on their culture, the elven language is rich with vocabulary, intricate with grammar, and subtle in its expressions. It takes many years to master the elven tongue, and only the elves themselves have the opportunity and time to do it. Many half-elves fall short of true mastery, and all other races can only hope for basic fluency. Most elves think that non-elves can only achieve the proficiency of an elven child, but only the most rude and arrogant elves would verbalize this opinion.

The script of Elven is a beautiful thing to behold, and it is used for many similar languages. Aquan, the language of the water outsiders, uses the Elven script, as does Sylvan, the language of many fey creatures. Not surprisingly, the elves feel the closest kinship to the water spirits and creatures of nature. Even Undercommon uses the Elven script, as the great numbers of the drow in the Underdark made it the most common. A few scholars who have seen the Druidic script consider it an odd mixing of altered Common and Elven characters, but both the druids and the elves contest this. Unlike Dwarven, few monstrous or evil races use the Elven script for their language, possibly because some of the most fecund and widespread races (orcs and goblinoids) already use the Dwarven script and others adapted it for convenience.

Elven is a living language, keeping pace with new discoveries and advances in learning. Unlike humans, who adapt words from other languages or make up words to suit their needs, elitist speakers of Elven prefer to use descriptions using current elven words. For example, while a human might refer to his gnome-built exotic weapon as a "pistol," an elf might call it a "thundering iron tube with the smell of smoke and the impact of a great hammer." As this phrasing is time-consuming and therefore inefficient in situations where time is of the essence (such as in combat), a practical elf either uses a shorter version of the lengthy description, such as "thundering tube," or just uses the Common word. In elven writing, song, and poetry, however, the formal and lengthy version is greatly preferred, and literature or arts that use the short forms are reviled as hack-work or doggerel. Because of the longevity of elves and their interest in history, the essentials of Elven have changed little over time, and ancient texts in Elven are completely understandable to modern elves (although cultural references might make some portions of the texts more difficult to understand or inexplicable to non-elves).

Elves prefer natural materials such as wood, and their alphabet reflects this tendency. Elven characters are composed of curving lines and gentle arcs, easy to carve into cut wood or living bark. Some elven artisans practice methods of woodcarving that work with the natural grain of wood. This might make their carvings impossible to see from one angle and completely visible from another, or disguise their marks as normal growth unless viewed with careful scrutiny. These methods are common in areas where enemies are known to pass.

Elven punctuation is a chaotic mess as far as non-elves are concerned. They have marks representing pauses of different length, accent marks that indicate additional levels of detail in a word or refer to a secondary meaning by association with a similar word, marks that show changes in volume, marks for the end of a sentence, a change in speaker, marks showing the status of the speaker and author, marks showing that a phrase should be repeated a certain number of times, marks suggesting hand positions and

Elven	Common	Part of Speech
ar	above	prep
atamar	adamantine	adj or n
deshu	after	prep
drii	air	n-element
irasku	ale	n-food
ent	and	conj
tarine	animal	n-creature
hithar	armor	n
elandi	arrow	n-weapon
shaalth	axe	n-weapon
esk	bag	n
enyor	battle	n
lani	beautiful	adj
kesha	before	prep
lothos	behind	prep
saaden	below	prep
ausa	beside	prep
ary	big	adj
cerlyn	black	adj-color
ilphu	blossom	n
tha	blue	adj-color
athel	bow	n-weapon
kathan	branch	n
kulaa	bread	n-food
nai	breeze	n
kukisha	bribe	v
sain	brook	n
leha	but	conj
sanerek	cave	n-place
surinya	celestial	n-creature
benerel	city	n-place
surnar	cleric	adj
tenya	clothing	n
arranaseer	courage/bravery	adj
reloseer	cowardice	adj
quar	dance	n
daquin	danger	n
nevae	dark	adj
nevaedarn	darkvision	n
noresh	day	n-time
arsurinya	deity	n-creature
karask	demon	n-creature
holi	dew	n
mion	diamond	n-wealth
mor	die	v
hakarmaskannar	dragon	n-creature
erkatam	dwarf	n-creature
erek	earth	n-element
kesir	elf	n-creature
hakar	enemy	adj
vaarn	evil	adj
noarun	far	adj
ennamar	few	n-number
maskan	fire	n-element
sekkar	flee	v
ama	flower	n
klatha	food	n-food
nesh	for	prep
ravan	forest	n-place
revanthas	friend	adj
lia	frond	n

AN ADVENTURER'S GUIDE TO PIDGIN ELVEN

Elven	Common	Part of Speech
kiir	gem	n-wealth
yewl	give	v
sharatam	gnome	n-creature
shan	go	v
scient	gold	adj or n-wealth
thar	good	adj
chas	green	adj-color
sherekir	halfling	n-creature
drag	hate	v
faenya	heal	v
meli	heel	n
enial	home	n-place
heriryar	horse	n-creature
bhen	human	n-creature
aul	in	prep
scennal	inn	n-place
mäult	iron	adj or n
cor	king	adj
anharad	leather	adj or n
ivae	light	n
staleen	luck	n
lerret	magic	n
rell	many	n-number
klathmor	meat	n-food
mithral	mithral	adj or n
nodel	moon	n
silath	mountain	n-place
lahr	name	n
tham	near	adj
lo	night	n
neh	no	adv
nars	nor	prep
amne	oak	n
arta	on	prep
enna	one	n-number
quin	or	conj
hakavarn	orc	n-creature
adon	peace	n
xilo	petal	n
alushtasa	rain	n
harsan	red	adj-color
revar	rest	v
jharren	rope	n
lersaat	scroll	adj or n
don	silver	n-wealth
sarash	small	adj
kekuel	smart	adj
desha	so	prep
hinue	song	n
quarlani	soul	n
hinual	speak	v
stacia	star	adj or n
maskaulat	steel	adj or n
diir	stone	n
neshanas	stop	v
kessuk	stupid	adj
kerym	sword	n-weapon
teshuel	take	v
leshere	thief	adj
eshaal	through	prep
nae	to	prep

posture if the text is spoken, and dozens of others. The effect is maddening to non-elves, but fortunately it is possible to function with only a few common marks. A comma in Elven looks like a comma (,), a period is a vertical line with curved ends (ʃ), and an exclamation point is a curved line with a loop (∂). Questions are flanked by a pair of curving lines (≈), representing the turns of a river. Possessives are indicated by a cord-like symbol (ℨ) after the owner, indicating the next item mentioned is the possession. One mark frequently used in Elven that has no equivalent in Common is the "cren" mark (€), used as a prefix indicating something important. For example, a common surnar would not have the cren mark, but the high priest of a temple would be written as €surnar, and a great king is €cor. The symbol is also sometimes used to indicate something magical, especially if the item had been described as such earlier in the writing. Thus, the elven warblade One Thousand Broken Dreams carried by the hero Datharian Mistwatcher might simply be written as €kerym later in a letter about him (of course, a ballad or story would use the full name of the sword and hero every time instead of the simple and expedient character abbreviation). Plurals are created by the prefix "ke'."

When elves carve on wood, they try to use as much of the surface as possible and make it an attractive item that doesn't waste the wood needed for it. Elven messages have been found on flat pieces of wood, on smooth strips of bark, and even circling smoothed branches and other cylindrical objects (such as arrows and bows). In addition to carvings on wood, elves have developed a form of paper made from pulped plant stalks, and their calligraphy and painted characters are as beautiful as their carvings. The paper medium allows them even more complexity in their writings, as they can give additional meanings to words using colors. This technique is exploited to its fullest only by master artists.

Elven consists mainly of open vowels and soft consonants, with few hard sounds. When spoken, it has a lilting flow that is somewhat musical. Words that modify other words can be placed before or after the main word, depending upon how the speaker or writer ranks them in importance. For example,

if an author was writing the story of a great battle and wanted to describe how the moon's light reflected on the hero's magic sword like liquid pieces of silver, thereby emphasizing the moon motif to relate to the hero's worship of Sehanine Moonbow, he might say:

€FelosiaƷ nodel ivae lerret mithral kerym don alus∫
[Felosial's moon light magic mithral sword silver liquid]

But if the author wished to relate how the light from the sword was like the tears the hero shed at the conclusion of the battle when she realized her sister had been slain, he might say:

€FelosialƷ don alus lerret mithral kerym ivae nodel∫
[Felosial's silver liquid magic mithral sword light moon]

If he wanted to compare the metal of her sword with a later statement about her mithral mail, he might say:

€FelosialƷ mithral don kerym lerret alus nodel ivae∫
[Felosial's mithral silver sword magic liquid moon light]

These phrases use the simple grammar used by non-elves, sometimes called Pidgin Elven.

Elves often insert vowels between words or at the end of words to enhance flow or to keep a rhythm. The vowel used is completely dependent upon the intent and preference of the speaker or author, and sometimes serves a function similar to Common's rule for using "a" or "an" in front of a word with a consonant or vowel. Non-elven speakers often omit this habit, allowing elves to identify them despite disguises.

Elven	Common	Part of Speech
morenial	tomb	n
belath	tomorrow	n-time
sehan	travel	v
lath	tree	n
avae	true	adj
biir	ugly	adj
mormhaor	undead	adj or n-creature
ernath	under	prep
keryth	war	n
alus	water	n-food
quen	we	pron
kerymeth	weapon	n-weapon
gala	whisper	v
ivae	white	adj-color
iasa	wine	n-food
faer	with	adj
rilis	wood	n
ashanelath	year	n-time
thuen	yellow	adj-color
avavaen	yes	adv
aeleth	yet	prep
nehel	you	pron

SAMPLE PHRASES

Below are some sample sentences and their translations into Elven. Note that since the list of vocabulary words is limited, some substitutions for similar words have been made. In effect, this is Pidgin Elven. Elven punctuation is included, although it is apparent that many of these sentences are verbal exchanges.

Mialee, talk to the ugly elf.
Mialee, hinual kesir biir∫
[Mialee talk elf ugly.]

The elf says the magic sword we want is in the lich's tomb.
Kesir hinual kerym lerret quen teshuel aul morenial €mormhaor∫
[Elf speak sword magic we take in tomb important-undead.]

He'll take us to the mountain of the tomb if we pay him.
Kesir teshuel kukisha teshuel quen nae moreniali silath∫
[Elf want pay take we to tomb's mountain.]

The cave is evil and dangerous. We should go.
Saaden vaarn ent daquin∫ Quen shan∫
[Below-earth evil and dangerous. We go.]

Shut up, you stupid coward! Get in there!
Nehi hinual, nehel reloseerò Kessuk Shan aulò
[No speak, you cowardice stupid! Go in!]

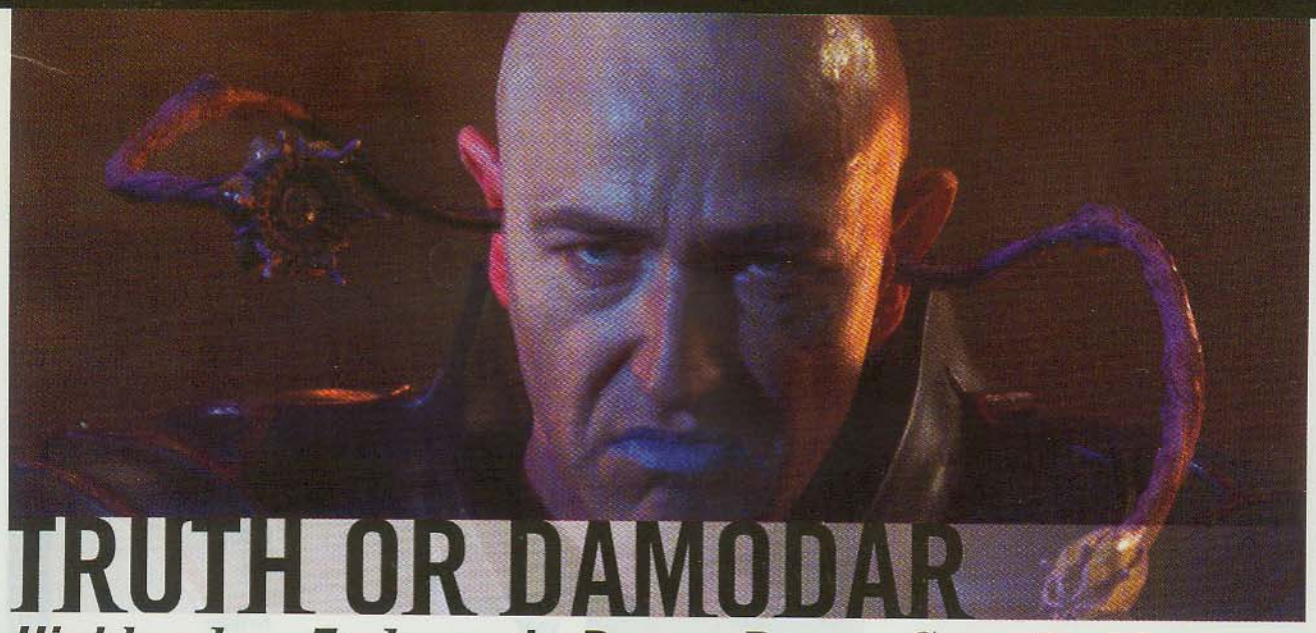
Tordek, hit the orc with your axe.
TordekƷ, enyor hakavarn faer neheli shaalth∫
[Tordek, battle orc with you's axe.]

A red dragon! Scram!
Harsan €hakarmaskannarò Nehel sekkarò
[Red dragon! You flee!]

Krusk is dead. He died with much bravery.
Krusk mor∫ Quarlani shan faer arranaseer ary∫
[Krusk die. Soul go with bravery big.]

Yeah, bad luck for him.
Avavaen, Krusk teshuel vaarn stalee∫
[Yes. Krusk take evil luck.]

Check out all of this gold! Tomorrow we'll be kings!
Scient rellò Belath quen ke'corò
[Gold many! Tomorrow we king and king!]



TRUTH OR DAMODAR

Highlander: Endgame's Bruce Payne Gets Badder—and Balder—in the *Dungeons & Dragons* Movie

By Cory J. Herndon

The big-screen DUNGEONS *&* *DRAGONS*, starring Jeremy Irons, Thora Birch, Justin Whalin, Marlon Wayans, Kristen Wilson, Zoe McLellan, Lee Arenberg, and Bruce Payne (to name but a few) is playing in theaters as you read this article—get out there and buy your ticket if you haven't seen it yet. Bring the magazine—you can read it in line.

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS offers not just one but two classy actors from across the pond in the film's major villainous roles. While Academy Award-winner Jeremy Irons's plotting mage Profion pulls Machiavellian strings from the city of Sumdall, his henchman Damodar mercilessly pursues a plucky band of heroes. Damodar heads the Crimson Guard, the secret police of Sumdall, who have become an extension of Profion's power.

Damodar is brought to nefarious life by actor Bruce Payne. Genre fans might recognize Payne from his recent role as Kell in *Highlander: Endgame*, Wesley Snipes' nemesis in the *Die Hard*-on-a-plane picture *Passenger 57*, or perhaps from his memorable turn as Jurgen on the television series *La Femme Nikita*. While filming a "mysterious, high-profile project" in Victoria, British Columbia, Payne was able to speak with us about acting, his work in the *DUNGEONS & DRAGONS* movie, memorable roles from the past, and the finer points of dancing with a steadicam.

GROWING PAYNES

Movies appealed to Payne from an early age. "When I was a wee, wee lad—you know, about two weeks ago—I was fascinated by the movie industry." That wee lad took this fascination seriously even then. "It wasn't lightweight. I realized that it was actually a vocation as opposed to a career. I think they're two very different things. We all have to live, we have to pay our bills on time, but a vocation is a very different psychological prerequisite for doing what we call 'acting.'"

Despite his early start, Payne wasn't born with a script in hand. "Growing up, I decided to test the water by enrolling in a school called the National Youth Theatre, an incredible establishment in London." Payne describes the experience as "four hundred kids thrown together to work on seven plays."

The young performer, though, had found his calling. Soon, he enrolled at The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London. "Of course you have to say The Royal AcAHdemy of DramAHtic AHt," he laughs, "or else they won't let you in."

Payne doesn't believe that the tradition of drama in England is all that different from acting stateside, or on the other side of the world. "People say 'traditionally trained,' but you're only traditionally trained if you stay inside the lines. I never did that. From a very young age I was exposed to No theater, Japanese films, German films, French films. I was attracted to the whole spectrum of the medium."

Not long after completing his studies at the Academy with a Royal Command Performance of the climax of "the Scottish play" before the Queen ("of England," Payne added helpfully), he set out to become a working actor. Success came quickly, and Payne landed roles in a string of British films such as *Privates on Parade* and *Absolute Beginners*.

Be careful where you scratch if you're wearing this gauntlet.

DAMNED IF YOU DAMODAR

All of film's best bad guys—except maybe Dennis Hopper—have been classically trained British actors. Damodar's success as a villain will ultimately rest with the audience, Payne believes. "The thing that will make it stand out will be the audience's reception. I truly do believe in the power of the people. An audience knows very much—after sitting inside a theater for an hour—how they feel."

The ensemble of actors worked well together despite the extremely short resumes of a few cast members. "I was privileged to be among a cast that was not jaded," says Payne, "A cast that wanted to make a fascinating movie, based on good, solid, old-fashioned story techniques."

The veteran was especially impressed with co-star Zoe McLellan, with whom he shares an intense scene. "Zoe's got a really good kind of central core to her. She's a very natural person, and unless she led me completely up the garden path, a very honest person. Coming from a real kind of . . . gentle, strong center."

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Payne believes that the preparation time director Courtney Solomon built into the production schedule pays off on screen. "We were blessed with the fact that Corey purloined and secured a sensible time to just work. Not so much rehearsal, but sitting around a table, day in, day out, working through the script. It is the way it should be done."

Unfortunately, as Payne knows, such work time must come from somewhere, and producers aren't crazy about rehearsal as a rule. "I really do believe that most producers have a creative element inside them that wants to make a great picture. I really believe that," Payne insists. "I've known a lot of producers over the years who like to say, 'what a wonderful story!—as long as it doesn't cost too much.'"

COMBAT READINESS

Payne has developed a reputation for talent with the blade, and he gets ample opportunity to show those skills in this film.

"I guess I'm very much a little boy at heart. I love those swashbuckler movies we've all seen a hundred times. Fortunately, I went to a classical drama school," he says. "During my studies I learned the short sword, dagger, epee, foil, broadsword—you name it." Payne, who "had the privilege to know some great fight choreographers," wasn't content with that, however, and has never completely stopped his stage combat training. Whenever he can, he fences in L.A. and tries to pick up something new with each swashbuckling film.

Beyond weapons, clothes often make the villain. Damodar is outfitted with only the best in evil equipment, naturally. "The costume was the closest of any to the original design." The armor, says Payne, produces an "almost samurai/Joan of Arc period" look to the character. "The breastplate is very gladiatorial. All the way down to the stomach part I look like an armadillo."

Then there was the gauntlet. "It was just incredible, the workmanship was just amazing. It's actually quite beautiful to look at." Appearances deceive, though. "Underneath it had this ominous presence, these little holes that were actually made out of the face of this kind of strange-looking beast. It was like, 'What's gonna come out of there?'"

So he fences and thinks fantastic armor is cool. But is he a roleplayer?

Payne's hectic schedule doesn't leave time for leisure activity such as gaming. When he does game, it tends to be electronic. "*Myst* and *Riven* I'm a big fan of. You know, if I had the time to play games, they'd probably detract from what I do. Some of them you could play forever."

He'll also drop a quarter or two for the sake of entertainment. "If I'm in a city where I haven't been in a while, and I know they have a really good arcade . . . well I'll be down there in a heartbeat."

STEADY AS SHE GOES

Some speculate that Payne might be planning to direct a film soon. "There are so many aspects of filmmaking that I just think are incredible. I think that the camera is an amazing instrument. It can do so much work for you as an actor . . . it's like being inside a conversation. It's like another character in the film."

Embracing knowledge of film's technical aspects, he believes, can only help an actor. "The more you understand about it, the more you can dance with it. Because that's what you're doing, you're dancing—especially if you're working with a steadycam."

You'd look impatient too if you had to deal with those pesky heroes.

For now, Payne's career as an actor shows no sign of slowing down. Unfortunately, he was not at liberty to name his current projects, saying only, "It's two humongous things, but I can't talk about them yet."

Security is getting out of control, says Payne. "It's a weird world we live in now. I mean, most of the scripts that I have have these serial numbers printed over every single page, 'you will go to jail, you will have to suffer the death penalty if you let your grandmother look at one single page . . .' Okay! It's their money, so you know I'm bound by that. It's frustrating."

Payne would also be happy to work with director Corey Solomon again, perhaps even in another *Dungeons & Dragons* picture. He appreciated how the director relied on his actors for ideas and valued their input.

"He would share things," says Payne, "He's the director. That's always number one. But like a head chef, he's in charge of the kitchen. You bring the part that you're asked to bring to it. When you're trusted this much, then it leads to even more collaboration. More comes out. Some people are incredibly intimidated by it, which I think is a bizarre situation. Why would you want to be involved if you're going to be intimidated by it? You want to be intimidated by someone, get in the ring with Mike Tyson."

UNUSUAL SUSPECTS 3
Monks & Druids

by James Wyatt • illustrated by Damon Brown

Half-orc druids? Gnome monks? When you already have halfling paladins and dwarf wizards, why not?

MONKS

The *Player's Handbook* implies that the monasteries that produce monk characters were a human creation, and therefore that monks are found primarily among humans. This need not be the case in your campaign. The monastic tradition might have originated among the members of another race, and it might or might not have spread to other races. Alternatively, monasteries might hold the equality of all races as an essential point of doctrine. They might actively recruit monks from all races, even if they are primarily a human phenomenon. Consider some of these variations on the nonhuman monk:

Dwarves

- A sect of dwarves dedicated to Moradin teaches that the goal of existence is the perfection of the dwarven race, which can only be accomplished one dwarf at a time. Perfection, they believe, is achieved through rigid discipline that turns the body into a fine tool—like a hammer or an axe—and the mind into a point of stillness swayed only by compassion. This sect is made up of lawful good dwarven monks, and they teach a unique style of unarmed combat called the Hammer Fist (see sidebar).
- Family and clan are extremely important to dwarves in general, and dwarves who—for whatever reason—fall outside of that structure often go to great lengths to find a substitute. For some dwarves, the structured community of a monastery is the ideal replacement, becoming the dwarf's adopted clan. A dwarf who was the orphaned survivor of a clan wiped out in war or a disgraced exile from his stronghold might find a new home in a monastery run by humans or members of other races. While he would be welcomed and accepted in the community, he still might not fit in—making him a perfect candidate for missions that require a monk to travel into the outside world.
- While some outcast or kinless dwarves find homes in a monastery, others find companionship with a single mentor—whether dwarven or otherwise—who trains them in the monastic life. These dwarves usually form bonds with their mentors deeper than any tie of family ever was, and all too often the sudden death of the mentor propels the student into a life of adventure.

Elves

- Their chaotic bent makes elves poorly suited to the rigid, even aesthetic life (and lawful alignment) required of monks. For this reason, monastic traditions do not normally appear within elven societies, though individual elves occasionally become monks. Such individuals usually have very good reasons for adopting a more lawful perspective: a strong sense of responsibility to others, conversion to a lawful faith, or even, on a societal level, opposition to a powerful chaotic force, such as an army of orcs or a horde of demons. By and large, those rare elves who are drawn to the monastic life study in human monasteries or with human mentors.
- The only native elven monastic tradition, as noted in the *Player's Handbook,* developed among the evil drow elves of the Underdark. Some drow recognize the need for strict personal discipline in order to hammer themselves into a powerful weapon against the surface elves they so despise. Training for years in brutal academies of martial arts, drow monks form elite strike teams among the military forces of their people. On very rare occasions, a drow monk gains enough

enlightenment on her spiritual path to overcome the years of indoctrination into evil that is characteristic of life among the drow. These lawful neutral drow monks often journey to the surface to escape the monstrous evil of their peers, though they rarely find any acceptance in surface society. Many drow monks are trained with unusual weapons, including kukris, punching daggers, or sickles (see the Unorthodox Flurry feat in the sidebar).

Gnomes

- To their lasting regret, many larger creatures that face a gnome monk in battle drastically underestimate their foe. A gnome's small size imposes some penalties on one who chooses the life of a monk, including reduced speed (compared to larger races) and Strength. On the other hand, gnomes are skilled at fighting larger creatures, they gain attack and AC bonuses, and even special dodge bonuses against giants. In some gnome societies, monastic orders arise to train gnomes for the specific purpose of fighting giants. One of the combat techniques developed by these monks is the Pebble Underfoot feat (see the sidebar).

- As mentioned in "Unusual Suspects: Wizards, Sorcerers, and Bards," some gnomes—usually independent students working with a single master—become multiclass illusionist/monks. These gnomes, who believe that mastery of magic is closely related to mastery over one's mind and body, usually begin their careers as illusionists and advance in that class until they achieve a certain level of mastery (generally 7th level, when an illusionist can learn *phantasmal killer,* or 11th level, when he can cast *permanent image*) before becoming monks. On the other hand, some begin their careers by developing their impressive physical abilities, advancing at least 5-7 levels as a monk (viewing Purity of Body and Wholeness of Body as important milestones on the monk's journey) before shifting focus to their magical training.

Halflings

- Like gnome monks, halflings who study the monastic way typically find themselves grossly underestimated. Unlike gnomes, halfling monks are unlikely to laugh when this occurs. Instead, they typically respond with a ki shout and a tremendous leap into battle. Surviving enemies have been heard to swear that the halfling's feet never touched the ground. While halflings rarely establish monasteries to train their unique martial traditions, they have distinct schools—each comprised of a single peripatetic master and a group of students—that pass on these traditions. One of the most common techniques taught in these schools is the Grasshopper Strike (see the sidebar).

- Since they so often live in close proximity to humans, halflings often study with human monks and learn human styles of martial arts. Though they are unlikely to remain in one place long enough to master any single

FIGHTING STYLES

These new feats are aimed at nonhuman monks, representing the unique fighting styles practiced in these traditions. At the DM's option, they might be available to any character, or only to monks of the race that teaches them.

HAMMER FIST (GENERAL)

Prerequisites: Str 13+, Improved Unarmed Strike.

You are trained in an unarmed fighting style that emphasizes a two-handed strike.

Benefit: You add one and a half times your Strength bonus to your damage when you hit with an unarmed strike. This extra damage does not apply if you make a flurry of blows attack or if you are holding anything in either hand. You must use both hands to make the unarmed attack.

UNORTHODOX FLURRY (SPECIAL)

Prerequisites: Monk level 6th+.

You are trained in a monastic tradition that uses nontraditional weapons.

Benefit: Choose one light weapon. You become proficient with that weapon and can use it as a special monk weapon. You can use your unarmed base attack when striking with it, including your more favorable number of attacks per round. You can also make a flurry of blows attack with this weapon. (You cannot choose a light exotic weapon unless you already have proficiency with that weapon.)

Normal: Without this feat, monks only gain these benefits with specific weapons: the kama, siangham, or nunchaku.

PEBBLE UNDERFOOT (GENERAL)

Prerequisites: Int 13+, Expertise, Improved Trip.

You have learned a special combat technique useful for bringing down creatures much larger than you.

Benefit: When fighting a creature at least two size categories larger than you, you gain a +4 bonus on opposed checks when you try to trip your opponent. If you fail to trip the creature, it cannot immediately attempt to trip you.

GRASSHOPPER STRIKE (GENERAL)

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Dodge, Mobility, base attack bonus +4 or higher, Spring Attack, 5 ranks in Tumble and Jump.

You confuse your foes by leaping around in combat, seemingly never touching the ground or standing still.

Benefit: You can take 10 on Jump and Tumble checks, even in the heat of combat, allowing you to jump as a part of your move without making a roll.

STAGGERING BLOW (GENERAL)

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, Improved Unarmed Strike, Wis 13+, base attack bonus +8 or higher, Stunning Fist, Str 15+ or stunning attack, base attack bonus +4 or higher, Strength 15+.

When you hit a stunned opponent with an unarmed strike, you can stagger him.

Benefit: If you make a successful unarmed strike against a stunned opponent, your opponent must make a successful Fortitude save against the same DC as that for your stunning attack. If he fails this saving throw, he is staggered. Staggered characters can only take partial actions each round (see page 85 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Your foe remains staggered for a number of rounds equal to half your monk class level.

ANIMAL COMPANIONS

As in the case of a nonhuman wizard or sorcerer's familiar, nonhuman druids often have particular preferences when choosing an animal companions.

DWARF: lizard (½ HD), giant lizard (3 HD), boar (3 HD), wolverine (3 HD), dire badger (3 HD), dire wolverine (5 HD), cave bear (6 HD), dire boar (7 HD), dire bear (12 HD)

ELF: monkey (1 HD), baboon (1 HD), eagle (1 HD), small viper (1 HD), large viper (2 HD), cheetah (3 HD), leopard (3 HD), constrictor snake (3 HD), giant eagle (4HD), giant owl (4 HD), gorilla (4 HD), huge viper (4 HD), dire ape (5 HD), lion (5 HD), tiger (6 HD), dire lion (8 HD), giant constrictor snake (11 HD), dire tiger (16 HD)

GNOME: chipmunk (¼ HD), groundhog (¼ HD), rat (¼ HD), lizard (½ HD), weasel (½ HD), badger (1 HD), dire rat (1 HD), small viper (1 HD), large viper (2 HD), dire weasel (3 HD), dire badger (3 HD), constrictor snake (3 HD), crocodile (3 HD), giant lizard (3 HD), huge viper (4 HD), giant crocodile (7 HD), giant constrictor snake (11 HD)

HALFLING: cat (½ HD), dog (1 HD), hawk (1 HD), pony (2 HD), riding dog (2 HD), donkey (2 HD), wolf (2 HD), light horse (3 HD), black bear (3 HD), heavy horse (3 HD), mule (3 HD), dire bat (4 HD), bison (5 HD), dire wolf (6 HD)

HALF-ORC: rat (¼ HD), jackal (dog, 1 HD), vulture (treat as eagle, 1 HD), hyena (treat as wolf, 2 HD), boar (3 HD), dire weasel (3 HD), wolverine (3 HD), dire bat (4 HD), dire wolverine (5 HD), lion (5 HD), cave bear (6 HD), dire wolf (6 HD), tiger (6 HD), dire boar (7 HD), rhinoceros (8 HD), dire lion (8 HD), elephant (11 HD), dire bear (12 HD), dire tiger (16 HD)

monastery's teachings, halfling monks often drift from one monastery to the next, learning a variety of styles and techniques. While these halfling monks are often quite impressive, they share the situation common to jacks-of-all-trades: flexibility at the expense of mastery.

Half-Orcs

- A specifically half-orcish monastic tradition is only possible if half-orcs exist as a distinct culture in your campaign (see the earlier "Unusual Suspects" articles for examples), and even so they are rare because of the race's tendency toward chaotic alignment. Where such traditions do exist, they tend to emphasize severe aestheticism and harsh discipline, producing monks who are particularly taciturn and rigid. These monks learn maneuvers and techniques that use a half-orc's strength to best advantage. One such technique is the Staggering Blow (see sidebar).

- Half-orcs (and half-elves) who live among humans enter human monasteries more frequently than any other nonhuman race. Since they are often orphans or foundlings, half-orc children are sometimes raised in good monasteries or serve as slaves in evil ones. The ones that show promise beyond their great strength are sometimes allowed to study and train with human monks.

DRUIDS

According to the *Player's Handbook,* druids represent a way of relating to the divine forces of the universe that is older and more primal—a druid might say, "more direct." Without intermediary deities, druids are connected to the elemental forces of nature, the basic building-blocks of the universe. Of course, races like elves and gnomes, which have a close connection to the natural world, often become druids. But no race is completely cut off from these primal forces, and druids can be found among any people.

Dwarves

- Just as dwarven rangers, called cavers, adapt the ways of a wilderness warrior to the wild places underground, so do some dwarven druids revere the spirits of nature that reside in the earth and stone of their subterranean homes. These deep druids have a close relationship to earth elementals and the animals of their world. They know more than perhaps any other creature about the complex ecosystems—from mosses and fungi to mind flayers and dragons—that sustain life underground.

- For all of the typical dwarven affinity for bare earth and rock, there are still some who feel a close connection with the things that grow in the earth. Some of these dwarf druids are like fertile earth themselves, with moss on their backs and vines twisting in their beards. Like deep druids, they are particularly drawn to the element of earth, but they share a closer relationship with the forests and animals of the surface world.

- Just as druids are common among barbarian humans, they are often found near communities of barbarian dwarves. If there are dwarven "hill tribes" in the campaign, or wild dwarves like those in the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting, these dwarves are likely to produce druids. A multiclass druid/barbarian puts a much harder edge on the standard druid class. (See "Unusual Suspects: Rangers, Paladins, and Barbarians" in *DRAGON* #275.)

Elves

- With their close affinity for nature, elves are commonly druids. However, an elven druid might seem a little more out of the ordinary if she comes from a more unusual natural area: a taiga, a steamy jungle, a mangrove swamp, or even a desert oasis. The druid's choice of animal companions might depend on her origin—a jungle druid might choose monkey companions (or leopards at higher levels), while a swamp druid might prefer snakes.

- Among certain groups of elves, individuals known as *celoralanalath*—those who sing the trees—are respected, if mysterious, figures in local folklore. These multiclass druid/bards live in isolation from elven communities, singing their haunting songs to the plants and animals of their woods. They inspire fierce loyalty in their animal companions and use their music to inspire courage and greatness in those animals when threatened.

Gnomes

- Like elves, gnomes live in close harmony with nature and often become druids. But while elves seem to have a particular affinity for trees and other plant life in the forests, gnomes are especially drawn to animals—particularly the small, burrowing animals with which they can speak. Rabbits, groundhogs, badgers, foxes, woodchucks, chipmunks, squirrels, mice, moles, and weasels—these sorts of animals are the gnome druid's friends and allies, and it is not uncommon for even low-level druids to have dozens of these animals as companions. When they gain the *wild shape* ability, gnome druids naturally prefer these animal forms as well (although they cannot transform into Tiny animals until 11th level).

- The gnomes of the great swamp from "Unusual Suspects: Rangers, Paladins, and Barbarians" ride giant lizards on their raids to destroy the evil warlord's caravans. Accompanying these fierce barbarian warriors and sorcerers are savage gnome druids who embody the swamp's dangers. Accompanied by snakes, lizards, and crocodiles, these druids are masters of traps, using spells like *entangle* and *spike growth* to harry the warlord's forces.

Halflings

- Certain nomadic halflings wander from village to village in human lands. Though they are druids, few of the humans they aid are aware of this fact. They use their spells and abilities to help crops and livestock, drive off threats to the farmlands, and generally provide whatever assistance they can to the community before moving along. In so doing, they believe they are helping humans live in closer harmony with nature: not by exploiting the earth and its bounty but by cooperating with nature in the production of these goods. These halfling druids are known as Tenders, Caretakers, or simply Helpers. Their animal companions tend to be domesticated animals, including dogs, cats, and ponies.

- Some halflings live near elves and in close harmony with the elven woodlands, and druids are quite common among them. Generally, these druids are hermits and loners, since clerics of Yondalla and the other halfling gods dominate the religious life of these communities. As these druids represent the wildness of the forest, with all its dangers, they are not always welcome among their people and spend most of their time in the company of animals or, occasionally, the elven druids they count as friends.

- Among halfling barbarians—like the plains-dwelling pony-riders described in *Dragon* #275—druids can be found as well. More primitive halflings might not know the halfling gods or believe that deities like Yondalla are too weak for their fierce people. These druids serve as the religious leaders of halfling barbarian tribes, performing rites of passage, celebrating the hunt, and calling on nature's protection for their people.

Half-Orcs

- As in other barbarian cultures, half-orc druids sometimes appear as the religious leaders of barbarian half-orc or even orc settlements. Often multiclass barbarian/druids, these dangerous figures tend to focus on spells of fire and devastation, emphasizing the destructive forces of nature. Though they are not particularly drawn to animals, they choose animal companions who highlight the random violence of nature: dire animals, particularly carnivores, and animals associated with death and decay (vultures, hyenas, and so on). As one might expect, these druids tend toward chaotic or evil alignments.

- Outcasts from both human and orc societies, some half-orcs find their only home in nature and their only friends among animals. Half-orc druids of this type often want little more from life than to be left alone, but they might be drawn into adventuring if something threatens their homelands. Earning the trust of such a character can be a roleplaying challenge for the entire party.

The Sleeping Tide

by J. Gregory Keyes

Illustrated by Justin Sweet

"WHERE ARE WE?" Fool Wolf asked.

He faced darkness, and his fingers gripped cold stone. From somewhere behind him, torchlight cast an inconstant copper glow on the woman crouched at his side. He could make out the gleaming curve of her thigh, the sleek muscles of her back, and enough of her fine-featured face to recognize her.

"Inah?" Fool Wolf said, more insistently. "Where are we?"

"Quiet!" she whispered.

In that wherever place behind them, several men began shouting. Their voices reverberated, as if in a cave.

"Wonderful," Inah said. Even in the dim light, her eyes were an impossibly pale jade. "Now suddenly you can talk, just when I don't need you to. Now we'll have to jump."

"Jump? Jump where?"

"Straight out there. Are you ready?"

"No! What's going on?"

For answer she snorted and stood. Something fast, small, and hard clipped the stone next to Fool Wolf's hand, and the shouting took on a triumphant tone.

"Jump or die," she said. She took four steps back, then charged into empty space. Fool Wolf, cursing, leapt with her.

"How far down is it?" he asked, as they hurled into cool black air.

"I have no idea," Inah shouted back.

In Fool Wolf's soul, the goddess Chugaachik stirred sleepily, then roared awake.

Where are we? she snarled.

That shocked Fool Wolf more than the fall, which after three heartbeats still hadn't ended.

BUT AFTER THE SIXTH HEARTBEAT something slapped the soles of Fool Wolf's feet so hard it jolted all the way to the top of his skull, filling it with flashes of fire and nonsense. Blood-warm water took him in, and it felt so pleasant and comfortable he thought he would just rest there for awhile.

Rest was denied him, however. Thick, muscular tentacles wrapped around his torso and squeezed. He beat feebly at them, but it was like fighting a tide. Water rushed by, faster and faster, and then his lungs began to ache, and he wondered how the sea would feel when he finally drew a breath.

Then he and his captor burst through the skin of the sea, and he gulped air that tasted of iodine and sewage. So grateful was he for the breath, it took a few moments to start worrying about what had grabbed him, and what had happened to Inah. He pushed again at the tentacles, wishing he had a sword or even a knife—wondering where they were. Wishing he could at least see.

Then he felt sand beneath his back, and the ropy limbs holding him uncoiled, and he lay on a pebbly beach, gasping.

"Inah!" He croaked, after a moment.

"Right here," she answered, from just behind him.

He turned and realized that he could see her, barely, in a pearly light filtering in from his right. Her naked limbs shone pale.

"Did you . . . ?" he began, but then decided he didn't want to know. He and Inah were lovers, companions, partners in crime. He knew she wasn't fully human—she was the daughter of the Tattooed Python King, the god of an island now far distant. If he had been dragged to safety by creatures she somehow commanded, that was one thing. If those tentacles belonged to her, he simply didn't want to know.

"We should go," Inah said "There's probably an easier way down. The priests might come after us."

"What priests? What are you talking about?"

"You really don't know?"

"I—" Inah didn't know about Chugaachik yet. "No," he finished.

"You got up in the middle of the night. You—come on, there's light this way. We can talk while we walk. But quietly—maybe they'll think we're dead."

She rose and started toward the light.

"Are we still in Pethvang, at least?" Fool Wolf whispered.

"We're in the temple mountain near it. The place where the pilgrims go."

"I crossed the water in my sleep?"

"Yes, on the floating causeway. It took me nearly all night to find you. You were trying to sneak into one of the shrines. You didn't answer me when I tried talking to you. It was like you were still asleep. I had to drag you as far as I got you when you woke up." She turned on him, her face shadowed. "You really—you really don't know any of this?"

"No." *But I know someone who does,* he thought. "Chugaachik."

"What was that?"

Fool Wolf hadn't realized he had spoken aloud.

"Chugaachik," he repeated.

"Is that a sneeze?"

"No," he said, reluctantly deciding it was time to tell her—because something was wrong. He always remembered what he did when Chugaachik took control. It was part of the curse. "It's the name of a goddess. My totem goddess. She lives in my chest, in my mansion of bone."

"I sensed something like that," Inah murmured. "I can see something in there. Why didn't you tell me? Can she help us escape?"

Fool Wolf laughed bitterly. "She's probably the one who got us in trouble."

Not so, Chugaachik whispered in his ear. *I'm as puzzled as you. Or is this some trick of yours to be rid of me?*

Fool Wolf ignored the goddess. Only he could hear her, anyway. "Chugaachik is a liar," he told Inah. "If I use her power, the price is that she takes control of my body. Then she does very unpleasant things."

"Such as?"

"She killed my cousin."

He always remembered what he did when Chugaachik took control. It was part of the curse.

Your lover, Chugaachik added, in gleeful tones.

"I called on her to save you and your father from Prince Fa, but I was so badly hurt she couldn't make me do anything. If I hadn't been injured, she would have made me kill you."

Oh, we would have done many things before we got to that. Amusing things. Wonderful things. Flashes of bare flesh and blood came with the words. Chugaachik had an inventive imagination.

"She would have tried to kill me," Inah corrected. "I am not as easy to murder as you might think."

"She is a very powerful goddess."

And your woman is very sweet meat. Let us show her what we can do.

Inah stopped walking and put her hands on her hips. "And yet you didn't mention this to me? That I might be in danger from my own lover?"

"Chugaachik has been weak since the fight on your island," Fool Wolf said. "And I never intend to use her power again."

"Yet you seem to think she set you walking last night. Did you make use of her? When? In our lovemaking, perhaps?"

"No," he grinned, pushing on. Up ahead, a circle of daylight appeared, and now he could make out her face plainly. "That was my own natural stamina."

"And she has never taken control of you in your sleep before?"

"Never. She can't."

No, curse you. If I could, I would do it every night.

"Maybe she can now," Inah said.

Fool Wolf considered that for a long moment. "I didn't kill anyone, torture any children, rape any old women?"

"No. You were very calm."

"That's not like her. Not like her at all."

"Well. Either you are lying to me—not for the first time—or your goddess has changed, somehow. Or we have a great mystery before us." She shrugged, as if it didn't matter which. "Here's more for you to think about. One of the men with the priests recognized you. He shouted your name."

"Really?"

"Yes. Have you ever been to Pethvang before?"

"I've never been to this miserable city in my life," Fool Wolf said, "much less this temple-mountain. I wouldn't be here now if our ship hadn't wrecked up the coast."

"So you say."

Fool Wolf spun her around by the shoulder. "You wanted to come along with me and see the world, remember?"

She stopped, took his face in her hands, and kissed him. "I don't regret it yet," she said, softly. "If you keep talking, I might."

The buttery light of the sun was bright enough to squint at, now. "Before we jumped. How did you know there would be water down here?" Fool Wolf asked.

"I smelled it," she said. "I know about islands. This one is made of soft white stone. Water eats it easily. You remember it? Tall and flat topped, with nearly sheer sides?"

"Like your own island."

"But mine is of hard, black stone. This one is different. Rain has burrowed wormholes in it, and the tide has chewed into its roots. The two watergods meet in the middle, and gnaw a hollow womb. That is what we jumped into, and I smelled the sea. Look, see there? The shore. The seagods made this tunnel. At high tide, it's probably full of water. We're lucky."

"I didn't think you visited any islands but your own, until you left with me."

"I never did. But my father was a creator of islands, in the ancient days. He told me all about them."

"Is this how we came in, through one of these tunnels?"

"No. There are steps carved on the outside of the island. They go all of the way to the top. That's how the pilgrims enter—all the way to the top, then halfway back down to the shrine caves. I don't understand why they don't come in this way. It would be easier."

"Because they're pilgrims," Fool Wolf explained. "They always do things the hardest way possible."

"Why?" Inah asked. She knew little of the world of human beings.

"I don't know," Fool Wolf answered, honestly.

After a moment they emerged from the tunnel onto a sun-lit beach. The sheer monolith of the temple mountain rose above them, a few scraggly trees clinging to its steep sides. The beach graded into a marsh of rushes and waving cattails, and beyond that, perhaps a league away, the city of Pethvang floated.

"This man who recognized me, what did he look like?"

"Very dark skinned, but with red hair. Big, very muscular. Tattoos on his forehead. He had the largest sword I've ever seen."

"You speak literally?" Fool Wolf asked, with faint sarcasm.

She blinked uncomprehendingly. "'Sword' is the word, yes, for the giant metal knives?"

"Yes."

Her description sounded familiar, suddenly. He had seen such a man before.

She must have noticed it on his face. "You know him?"

"Maybe." Fool Wolf surveyed the marsh. "Now we need a boat."

"We're going back to Pethvang?"

"Everything we own is there. It's a big place, full of pilgrims. I doubt the priests can mount a search large enough to find us anytime soon.

"A man is coming," Inah murmured. "Maybe he has a boat."

Fool Wolf looked around. He neither saw nor heard anyone.

"I suppose you smell him?"

Inah stuck out her tongue and waggled it. "I taste him," she replied.

THEY CAME ACROSS AN OYSTER-FISHERMAN a few moments later, a slight, grizzled old man who eyed Inah greedily. He agreed to take them across the inlet to Pethvang for no cost.

"Just so long as the lady doesn't mind me looking at her," he said. "One doesn't see such beauty uncovered often. It is forbidden." He pulled on the oars a few times. "How did you come to be on the temple-mountain? And how without clothes? Are you pilgrims?"

"We were shipwrecked," Fool Wolf said. "We lost everything."

"Well, Thesk-of-the-Sea must have smiled on you, to bring you to Pethvang. It's the greatest city in the world."

"It certainly is," Fool Wolf lied, glancing at the motley collection of dilapidated houseboats and stilt-dwellings they were approaching. The central city beyond, with its slender towers and colonnaded piazzas, was grander, but Fool Wolf had seen Lhe, Nhol, Rumq Qaj. "Why did they build the city in the water?"

"Ah! It was an arrangement we made with Thesk-of-the-sea, long ago. We once lived on the mainland, but the marauding Reng tribes were troublesome. Thesk offered us haven. He took the tide out for eight and fifty days, long enough for our ancestors to lay the foundations of the Quays."

"And what do you give Thesk in return?"

"Why, our love, of course, and our respect."

"So Pethvang doesn't really float," Inah said. "It's built on stone."

"Such music, your voice!" the fisherman exclaimed, his gaze fixed on her breasts. "Most of it floats. The Quays are the only solid part of the city. The rest of Pethvang was built on barges. You'll see that when you're there. The Quays stay level—the rest of the city goes up and down with the tide."

Fool Wolf and Inah had already spent a night in Pethvang—or part of one, anyway—but he hadn't noticed that. He reflected that the barges must be very large indeed.

"What's your name?" Inah asked the man.

"Ner. Ner Mank."

"Ner Mank, is there someplace we can get clothes? At one of these stilt-houses, perhaps?" She reached over absently and rubbed the fisherman's nearly bald head.

He blushed a darker shade of bronze. "I think we can manage that," he said.

FOR AN EMBRACE AND A KISS on the cheek from Inah, Ner took them beneath a clothesline, where they stole a loincloth for Fool Wolf and a sarong for Inah. Then the old fisherman paddled them into a long canal marked on each side by towering statues carved of the same white stone as the temple mountain. The first they passed looked new, sharply carved men and women bearing batons in the shape of a paddle in one hand and conch shells in the other. As they moved into the city, the status became progressively more weathered, until they were nothing more than vaguely human-shaped stones.

"Your kings and queens?" Inah asked.

"No. Those are the sacred heroes, the ones who battle Thesk-of-the-Wave."

"I thought Thesk was kindly to you."

"That's Thesk-of-the-Sea. Of course, both Thesks are the same god, I suppose, just as the dark moon and the bright moon are the same goddess. But how different they are in different aspects. Now, see! Here are the Quays."

They had been passing through the city for some time. On either side of the corridor formed by the statues, buildings crowded together on what Fool Wolf could now see were numerous barges, some of moderate size, some massive enough to place a small town on. They were connected by bridges and heavy timbers. But the waterway now entered the horseshoe-shaped harbor in the very center of the city. Each side of the horseshoe was perhaps half a league in length.

Fool Wolf had first seen Pethvang at high tide, and had besides been exhausted from the shipwreck and the effort of relieving a pair of would-be pirates of their longboat and jade coins. Then, the water had come to the very lip of the fitted-stone walkways that outlined the harbor. Now the Quays stood the length of two men out of the water, revealing their barnacle-encrusted sides. Along the inside—the harbor side—a thousand watercraft were docked: double-hulled merchantmen from the Land of Nine Princes, battered twelve-oared galleys from Lhe, lateen-rigged *phanga* from the Jara archipelago, princely yachts, and leaky fishing canoes like the one they were in. The quays themselves had broad backs, and a few strides from the waterfront the soaring spires and gilded domes of palaces and public buildings challenged the sky.

The rest of the city—which stretched leagues in each direction—had sunken since Fool Wolf had last seen it, though parts of it were no less grand than the Quays. At high tide, the tallest towers on the barges had been higher than the tallest towers on the stone heart of the city. Each day, one part of the city eclipsed the other in stature.

Ner Mank put them off on a landing, and with a final wave and leer at Inah, went to sell his oysters. Fool Wolf and Inah warily wound their uncertain way to the inn where they had taken lodging the day before.

The attendant, a round man with round eyes, met Fool Wolf and Inah at the door.

"Good day, lord and lady," he said, bowing jerkily. "I did not see you go out. How can we attend you?"

"An acquaintance of mine was to drop by. Has he come asking for me?"

"Not to my knowledge, lord."

Fool Wolf affected an exaggerated sigh. "Very well. Have some wine and an evening meal sent up to my room."

When they were back in their room, Fool Wolf confirmed that the jade coins he had hidden under a floor board were still there. The curved Banwan sword he had taken from the pirates and his clothes hadn't been disturbed either.

"Is it safe to stay here?" Inah asked.

Fool Wolf shrugged. "It depends on what they thought we were doing, whether they know we survived, and how efficient their city guard is. In my experience, in a city this large, with as many inns as it has, we have time for a meal, at least. They've probably given up the search."

"But the man who recognized you. What of him?"

At that moment, someone rapped on the door. It was a serving girl, bearing platters of seared tuna, pickled squid and a pale yellow pudding she called *ithel*.

"You'll have a good view from the balcony," she said, cheerfully. Fool Wolf barely heard her—he was starving.

Inah and Fool Wolf sat on their balcony, eating, watching the sun set and the city rise. Inah went back over the details of Fool Wolf's behavior the night before, but they made no more progress on deciphering the mystery.

As the city lay beneath the last red gasps of the sun, Fool Wolf heard music approaching, and a crowd began to gather along the boulevard below their window.

"A good view of what?" Fool Wolf said. He'd been so preoccupied with hunger he thought the serving girl meant the sunset, or the city.

Pethvang shook to drumming, conch shell trumpets, and wailing reedy pipes. The already colorful crowd below become positively fluorescent as hordes of children arrived, bearing great baskets of flowers. The throng took the blooms, waving them high as the drumming came nearer.

A bizarre parade followed. The drums were wider than the length of a horse, mounted on carriages dragged by twenty men each. The trumpet players and pipers followed, and then a long procession of dancers in grotesque masks that covered their entire bodies. Men and women—some painted all black, others all white—tripped odd, drunken dances. Giant crocodiles and sea snakes of wood, leather, and paper wriggled down the streets, some with as many as twelve people in them.

After that came the boats. Canoes and catamarans, lap planked barques, sleek warships with iron prows shaped like sharks heads, all dragged on wheeled frames.

It was quite a spectacle, but Fool Wolf was growing bored with it. Inah seemed delighted, however, and he continued to watch with her.

After the boats, warriors in cuirasses of lacquered crocodile skin and brightly colored headwraps flourished swords, spears, and bows, shouting fiercely. Finally, following them, a palanquin so huge it took thirty groaning men to bear it came through, and the crowd frenzied, tossing their flowers. The seat of the litter was high and flat, clearly a replica of the temple mountain, and on it stood one lone figure, holding a baton shaped like a paddle in one hand and a conch-shell in the other. He had red hair, and in the fading light his skin appeared as black as pitch. On his back was sheathed a sword almost as long as he was tall.

Fool Wolf ducked back into the shadows of his room, Inah one step behind him.

"That was the man!" she exclaimed. "The one who knew you in the temple!" She shook the back of her palm at Fool Wolf. "And you do know him!"

"We've met," Fool Wolf allowed. "His name is Uzhdon, the Opal of Nah."

"You met," she said, skeptically. "Does he have an argument with you?"

"I threw him out of the window of a very high tower." He scratched his chin. "Twice."

"And he lived?"

"That sword on his back is a godsword. It will allow him to be killed only in fair combat."

"And you weren't fighting him?"

"Not exactly. I just distracted him and threw him out the window."

"Twice."

"It's a long story."

"So Uzhdon has little love for you."

"I believe he has sworn to hunt me down and kill me," Fool Wolf admitted.

"He seems to be the champion of these people, the sort they make the statues of."

"Yes, he does, doesn't he?" Fool Wolf furrowed his brow. "But he told me he was from Nah."

"Where is that?"

"Three months travel from here, at least."

"Maybe he lied."

Fool Wolf chuckled. "That's very unlikely."

"Well—could he have anything to do with your sleep-walking?"

Fool Wolf had already thought of that. "I don't know. Maybe."

Yes, Chugaachik said. *It must be him. Follow him. Kill him.*

"Let's get some rest," Fool Wolf suggested, ignoring his goddess. "Tomorrow, first light, we leave Pethvang."

"And if you walk in your sleep again?"

"Stop me."

"Shall I tie you up?"

"That sounds fun, but no. Still, speaking of fun . . ."

They tangled, squirmed, and sweated. Surrounded by the sent of Inah's faint, snaky musk, Fool Wolf drifted off to sleep.

And in his sleep, it seemed, he slipped below the lake, whose surface is the world most men know. He drifted down, a sinking leaf.

His feet touched upon gray stone, a plain that stretched away to jagged peaks in every direction. Two of them exhaled plumes of dark ash. He walked, and after a time he came to a city of the same stone. Flanking the broad way were twin statues, crouching figures of jackal-headed lions beside which Fool Wolf was ant-sized. Their eyes gleamed like fishscales, and the sight of them brought blood to his loins and jolted a fierce anger through him. He laughed, Chugaachik's laugh.

Beyond the statues, the city was massive cubes and columns, and a thousand thousand kneeling men and women in rags. They seemed to be chanting a hymn as gray dust from the sky settled on their shoulders.

Then something parted the crowd in the distance, a man in the mask of a black-beaked bird. A darkly patterned kilt his only clothing, his flesh so white it seemed to shine. The crowd shouted a name to him, but Fool Wolf could not make it out. The masked man came on, white light blazing through the eyeholes of his mask, until he stood directly in front of Fool Wolf.

In one hand the masked figure held the leashes of four hounds, or what Fool Wolf first took for hounds. One was as white as his master, skeletal, with sapphire eyes. The next was more tiger than dog, hunch-shouldered like the grass bears of Fool Wolf's native steppes. The third, sleek and gray, had the head of a hawk, and the fourth was a black, bristling mass.

Now Fool Wolf wanted to run, but his feet were rooted. The earth began to tremble, and the hounds drew so near the stench of their breath made him want to vomit.

The masked figure halted, regarded him for a long moment, then removed his mask.

The face was so magnificent Fool Wolf wanted to weep, and he feared the beauty was so terrible he would die from the mere sight of it. But then the face changed, became dusky, with red hair and curling tattoos on its forehead. Became Uzhdon, the Opal of Nah.

"Come," Uzhdon said. "Come."

He feared the beauty was so terrible he would die from the mere sight of it.

FOOL WOLF WOKE PINNED by some heavy weight, both arms twisted behind his back and held by something that cut into his wrists like steel jaws.

"What?" he managed.

"Are you awake?" Inah's voice came, from above him.

"Yes! Let me go!"

"Who am I?" she demanded.

"You are Inah, the Python King's daughter. I met you on the island of Ranga Lehau."

"Very well." The pressure vanished, and his wrists were released. He scrambled to his feet.

"What happened?"

"You fell asleep. You started to walk again."

He shivered. "We're leaving this city. Now."

"Fool Wolf?"

"Yes?"

"When our ship was wrecked on the rocks up the coast, I was asleep. You were at the tiller."

"Yes."

"Were you awake?"

"Yes," Fool Wolf lied. In fact, he had fallen asleep and awakened to the sound of rocks clashing against the hull, but he had never seen the point in admitting that to Inah. He still didn't.

"Then you think it is a coincidence that your friend Uzhdon is here?"

"It must be. He must have seen me and done some sort of sorcery."

"Why? Why not simply come kill you?"

"I don't know and I don't care. Maybe he's afraid I will throw him from a window again. I'm leaving, now. You can come with me or not."

"Of course I'm coming with you, you fool."

THEY STOLE A BOAT and made the mainland by morning, slipping through the Reng forests in the early light. By that night they were entering the highlands, following a steep path that wound past stone shrines decorated with human skulls. Near sundown they came to a prospect from which they could see the bay, Pethvang, and the temple mountain looming over it. They camped farther up, where the curve of a ridge obscured the view.

Once more, Fool Wolf awoke pinioned.

The next day they reached a high plateau. They bargained for food at a Reng hunting camp, crossed the escarpment, and began descending into the valley that the Reng called Sleeping Mother.

The next morning, Fool Wolf awoke in Inah's sure grip. This time he had escaped her long enough to run all the way back up to the plateau.

Three days later, cursing Uzhdon, Uzhdon's mother, Nah, and Pethvang, Fool Wolf and Inah gave up and returned to the floating city, seeking the Opal of Nah, and an answer.

FOOL WOLF WOKE WITH HIS WRISTS TIED tightly behind his back. For a few awful moments, he didn't know what was going on, but then he realized that Inah was beside him, stroking his forehead, soothing him. He smelled brine.

"Shhh," she said. "It worked."

"Untie me!" He had agreed to be tied, this time, to make it easier for her. But he didn't like it.

The bonds parted, and Fool Wolf rubbed his aching wrists. His skin was rough and salty. "I'm becoming very tired of asking 'where are we?'," He muttered. "Are we in the temple mountain?"

"No," Inah said. "You went into the city, to the easternmost point of it, then leapt into the sea. I had to save you from drowning."

"Were we wrong, then? Uzhdon is not drawing me to him?"

"We weren't wrong. Uzhdon is here."

"Which is where?" He looked around him. They were in a large chamber of cut and polished coral. The walls were incised, floor to ceiling, with some sort of script. A raised altar and a large, half-carved statue occupied one end of the chamber. Though unfinished, Fool Wolf was certain he could see a resemblance to Uzhdon in it.

"Below Pethvang," Inah said.

"Below?"

"Yes. The Quays are built on a coral reef. The reef has caves in it. I believe Uzhdon is in a cave below this one, and I sense the easiest way to it is through here."

"How long have we been here?"

"A few moments. I did not think it was a good idea to confront Uzhdon with you in your sleeping state."

"Good thinking. Let's find the entrance before—"

"Not just yet," someone else said.

Filing into the other end of the shrine were several men in parrot-feather robes, and perhaps twenty armored warriors.

The man who had spoken was one of the robe-clad men, a stocky, flat-faced fellow with broad nostrils. He waved the back of his hand at Fool Wolf and narrowed his eyes. "You were the ones we saw before, in the temple mountain. The ones who tried to spoil the *inaman* ceremony. Now you seek to desecrate the *pae* shrine of Thesk-of-the-Sea. Why?"

"We weren't trying to desecrate anything," Inah said. "My friend is afflicted with a curse that drew him here."

"Really?" the priest sniffed. "And it drew him to the temple mountain as well?"

Fool Wolf placed a hand on Inah's shoulder. "My friend speaks half the truth," he said. "I am cursed, that is true. A healer put a song on me that would take me to the cure. I believe it has been leading me to your champion."

"He was in the Temple Mountain that night," Inah added. "And he is here, yes?"

Uzhdon, the Opal of Nah, was seated on a raised dais. He was chained to it by enormous links of coral.

"In a manner of speaking," the priest replied. "If your intentions were innocent, why did you flee in the temple mountain?"

"We were chased," Fool Wolf replied, simply. "We realized we must have accidentally violated some tapu unknown to us and became fearful of the punishment."

"Well, you are fortunate. You did not actually interrupt the *inaman* ceremony, so no harm was done. And this shrine has been rendered unsacred until the champion has completed his task of battling Thesk-of-the-Waves."

"When will that be?"

"Today, at high tide. He has been battling Thesk for four days, now, and that is the time allotted in the founding times, when Thesk-of-the-Sea took the tide out for us. Thesk-of-the-Waves demanded a contest with a champion, every ten years."

"When he is done fighting, we can see him? What if he loses?"

"Win or lose, it doesn't matter to Thesk, so long as he has a battle. But you can see the champion now, if you wish. You can watch him battle. We men of Pethvang cannot—it is *tapu* for us—but you are foreigners."

"Will Thesk attack us?" Inah asked.

"Assuredly not. He demands one—and only one—champion every ten years." The priest shrugged. "If you wish to see him, the way lies behind the altar. You may borrow an oil lamp. If not, you may remain here and pray, or leave. It is up to you. But make no noise, nor disturb our meditations. Count yourself lucky that your ignorance did not lead you into real trouble."

"Thank you," Inah said.

The priests nodded, then went back out the way they came, the warriors close on their heels.

Fool Wolf and Inah found the passage behind the altar, two large valves of coral set into the floor. They were too heavy to lift, but a windlass on the wall proved the mechanism to open them. What lay beneath was a steep stairway going down, smelling of the sea.

Fool Wolf stepped down a few steps, Inah behind him. After a few more, she tapped him on the shoulder.

"The tide comes this high," she said, indicating the stairwell, a finger's breadth below the valves.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean at high tide, this stairwell fills all of the way up."

"Horse Mother!" Fool Wolf cried, bolting back up the steps.

If he had made it up another heads-length, the slamming valve would have broken his neck. The echo hummed down the stairs and back up. He pushed at the portal, but it didn't budge.

"Well," Inah said. "This wasn't very clever at all."

"It was your idea," Fool Wolf reminded her. He pushed again at the valve. "Well," he said. "I wonder if Uzhdon is down here at all."

"He is, or was," Inah replied. "I taste him."

"Well. Let's follow your tongue, then," Fool Wolf replied. "If it's never brought me luck, it's at least brought me pleasure."

THEY FOUND UZHDON in a rough twin of the shrine above, a large chamber with an alter. This one was crusted with slime, seaweed, and pale, purplish barnacles, and there was a large pool of water in the middle of it. Uzhdon turned to look at them as they descended the stairs.

"The four days are passed?" Uzhdon asked. His voice sounded strange, as if something were trying to strangle him.

"As you see, I am not the champion that you—" he stopped, staring at Fool Wolf's face.

"You aren't a priest," Uzhdon said. "I remember you."

Fool Wolf said nothing, but the hairs on the back of his neck, crusted as they were with brine, nevertheless stood on end.

Uzhdon, the Opal of Nah, was seated on a raised dais. He was chained to it by enormous links of coral, his hands and feet hidden by massive manacles of the same substance. The man himself looked haggard and waterlogged, though his eyes still retained a bright gleam.

"Yes," Uzhdon continued, slowly. "I know you! You threw me out of a window in Rumq Qaj!" He frowned. "Twice! And the second time the whole building fell on me."

"Well, you were planning to kill me," Fool Wolf reminded him.

"In fair combat!" Uzhdon shifted his gaze to Inah. "Lady, I advise you against associating with this man. He is without honor or scruples, and a terrible goddess lives in his breast."

"I'm aware of that," Inah replied.

"Well, I'm sure you must not know him as well as you think," Uzhdon went on, "or you would not be with him. I sense nothing evil about you, though I do see you have some godblood in you. I urge you to free me—" he broke off, and a look of suspicion crossed his face. "Is this *your* doing, Fool Wolf? Did you send the dreams, and the spirit that brought me sleep-walking to this place?"

"Oh, great gods of the mountain," Fool Wolf groaned, sinking down onto a damp coral step.

"Well?" Uzhdon said. "Can't you at least tell me why you bewitched me?"

"Who chained you down here, Uzhdon?"

The warrior looked puzzled. "Why, the priests, of course. You must know that. They want me to fight their god, Thesk."

"How can you fight a god, chained like that?"

"I'm supposed to fight him in the netherworld, after I've drowned. The tide fills this chamber, I'm supposed to die, then fight their god in spirit form. If I defeat him, they make a statue for my soul to live in."

"You agreed to do this?"

Uzhdon pursed his lips. "Well, they didn't tell me everything, at first. They led me to understand Thesk-of-the-Waves was evil, and, as you know, my mission is to destroy evil, as I did at Rumq Qaj."

"When did they tell you you would have to die?"

"After they put the chains on."

"You aren't very smart, Opal of Nah."

"I'm perhaps too trusting. After all, I trusted you, and you betrayed me. But cynicism is the first of many steps to damnation." He suddenly looked upset. "Do I understand by your questions that you had nothing to do with summoning me here?"

"Why in the name of the Horse Mother would I do that?" Fool Wolf asked. "I hoped never to see you again."

"Then please accept my apologies. I accused you without reason." Uzhdon paused. "Why are you here, if I may ask?"

"He thought *you* were summoning *him*," Inah said.

"Hush!" Fool Wolf snapped. "Don't tell him anything he doesn't need to know."

"What? Then we were both tricked?"

"No," Fool Wolf said. "*You* were tricked. I was enspelled."

"But by who?" Inah asked. "For what reason?"

"Do you also dream of a city?" Uzhdon asked. "A city in a wasteland, and a man with the face of a hawk coursing four hounds?"

Fool Wolf bit his lip, but did not answer that question. Instead he pointed up. "The priests think you've been dead for four days, battling their god."

"Yes, but of course Hukop, my sword, brother to my totem, will allow me to die only in even combat."

"So the tide comes in, and you just sit there, underwater."

"It is very unpleasant," Uzhdon acknowledged.

"What happens if no one fights Thesk?" Fool Wolf wondered.

"If Thesk is anything like my father," Inah said, "he will not take lightly to his covenant being broken. I do not think we will want to be in Pethvang when the tide rises." She pointed to the pool in the center of the floor, which was larger than it had been when the conversation began. "And it's rising now."

"Will that pool take us out?"

"It certainly goes to the sea. That's probably why you jumped in, earlier. More than that I cannot say." She shifted. "I can swim for a great distance without air. But you—"

"Can you find out how far it is?"

"Yes."

He leaned over and kissed her. "Good luck."

She smiled and dove into the pool.

After she left, a silence settled between Uzhdon and Fool Wolf. The warrior broke it.

"You're not going to free me, are you?" Uzhdon asked.

"Why should I?" Fool Wolf replied. "So you can kill me as soon as you get the chance?"

"You have evil in you," Uzhdon said, reasonably. "There you have your answer."

Uzhdon drew himself up. "Suppose I promise not to kill you until after this is over?"

"Until what is over?"

"Until we discover who has bespelled the two of us. Even then I will give you fair warning and a day's start."

"A week's start," Fool Wolf amended.

"Very well. One week of seven days, from morning to morning. I swear it by my ancestors, by the covenant of Nah-hatham, and by my totem, the Seven-Bearded Hawk, the Fourth Thunderbolt."

"Fine."

"But will you swear in turn not to throw me from windows, cliffs, or ledges, or to take me unawares in any manner while our truce lasts?"

"Why of course," Fool Wolf said. "By my people, the Mang, I swear it." His people had never really cared much for him, anyway.

"Good. Can you free me of these, then?"

It was Fool Wolf's lock-picking tools that eventually got him through the shackles, and then Uzhdon rose to his impressive full height.

"Thank you," he said. "Though you only serve your self-interest, I commend you. You have done a good thing, no matter how inadvertently."

At that moment, Inah came up from the pool.

She took in the new situation quickly.

"You might make it," she said. "I can't be sure."

"I don't like the sound of that," Fool Wolf said.

"I can swim it," Uzhdon said. "My sword will not let me drown."

"And so?"

"The priests, I have determined, are evil. I shall swim above and slay them."

"I'll help," Inah added.

"No, lady," Uzhdon said. "The risk is too great. I would not jeopardize such beauty."

Did Inah blush and bow her head a bit? Fool Wolf felt a sudden flash of—of, well, something. Surely Inah did not in any way admire this fool.

"There must be another way," Fool Wolf said.

The floor was covered in water now, and the level was rising all too swiftly.

"There is not," Uzhdon replied. "You have freed me; we have made a bargain." He turned, and leapt into the water.

Inah hesitated. "Will he keep his bargain?"

"Yes," Fool Wolf said. "Every word of it. Go with him."

She hesitated, then kissed him again. He savored the taste.

"Go," he said. "I'll see you above."

She nodded, and plunged into the rising waters.

THEY AREN'T COMING BACK, Chugaachik sneered.

Fool Wolf had moved to the top of the stairs, just beneath the sealed trapdoor. The lantern sat beside him as he watched the water rise.

"I know," he replied.

You know?

"I listened very carefully to Uzhdon's promise. He never promised to open the valves and free me. If he meant to free me, he would have said so. He promised not to kill me himself, and he won't, but he won't object to the water doing it."

If you knew that, why didn't you make him promise to free you?

"I don't want him to."

Then why didn't you go with them? You might have made it, with your snake-woman's help.

"Because I wanted to talk to you. I'm about to die. This is the time you start raging about how I ought to release you, how you'll save me, and how much I'll enjoy your perverse antics in my body. But you haven't said a thing."

The goddess was silent, but she moved within him, brushing his thoughts with a sleekness like fur and warm flesh, a scent like burning anise, a hunger that only an immortal could know.

"You've closed wounds on me that would have bled ten men to death," Fool Wolf went on. "We bit through the neck of a giant together. Maybe we couldn't break these doors, but you could give me the strength to swim after Uzhdon and Inah, couldn't you?"

His eyes suddenly blazed with a different sort of vision, and strength went like black wine into his veins.

Again, she was silent. The water crept higher.

"It's you being summoned, Chugaachik, not me. You. You just happen to be in my body."

Nonsense.

"No, not nonsense. The priest in Rumq Qaj was able to free you without my consent. Now someone is controlling you without my consent, and when I'm asleep, they allow you the use of my limbs. But it isn't your will being done, it's theirs."

You're guessing.

"So are you, but we've guessed the same thing. And now you're afraid to take control of me when I'm awake because you're afraid that will strengthen whoever-it-is' power over you."

No.

"Where are your promises, then, your cajoling, your taunts? You don't want to entice me with the pleasures we

will have together, once you've helped me escape from here?" The water had touched his toes, now. With it came a tingle that went straight to his head, a feeling of being crushed, buried alive. His throat went dry and his fingers trembled a bit.

Darken your mouth.

Fool Wolf put his back to the portal and heaved until he thought his back would break. The air was getting stale.

Before the air could go too bad, he took four deep, slow breaths, holding the last, dropped the lantern down the stair, and dove.

The lantern sputtered fitfully for a heartbeat or two, and the water-filled way was green, almost tranquil. Then the light went out, and he swam through the darkness before the world was born.

Down, down. Before he even reached the lower temple, his lungs began to hurt.

Come, he said. *Come, Chugaachik.*

No.

You don't have a choice. I've never compelled you because I've never wanted you in me. But I have the right.

No.

Come.

His eyes suddenly blazed with a different sort of vision, and strength went like black wine into his veins. The world was limned in shades of blue and gold, the void of cold stone, the glistening heartstrands in living things. He swam down through the pool at the bottom of the shrine, through the twisting tunnels of coral, toward the sea beyond. All pain was forgotten, all remorse snuffed out. There was only anger, and a faint taste like fear.

HE EMERGED FROM THE WATER like a two-legged shark, smelling blood, and thought fled him as he lunged forward at the first prey he saw. His talons tore soft flesh, and blood sprayed like surf. The air was already full of incoherent shrieking, but more immediate screams went up around him. He reached for the next person—a young woman, perhaps sixteen, and his lips curved up in delight. He held her up before himself, laughing at her fear, thirsting . . .

No, Chugaachik said. *No. He will find us, like this.*

An image lept up like a flame—the city, the hawk-masked man, the hounds. *He is reaching—Hide me, Fool Wolf. Lock me away. And do not sleep.*

The rage leaked out of him reluctantly, so reluctantly that the girl nearly died, anyway. But finally he put her down, gazed dully at the messy ruin of the priest at his feet, and tried to understand what was going on around him.

Do not sleep. Then Chugaachik was silent, burrowed as deeply in his Mansion of Bone as she could go.

He had come up, not on one of the stable, stone quays, but on one of the huge barges that supported the rest of the city. It was tilted a bit, so he had a hard time standing up straight.

The reason he had not come up on a quay was obvious—they were underwater, and even the tallest towers upon them were half submerged. The air was filled with the sound of beams shattering, iron twisting and snapping as the barges tried to tear free of the bridges and walks that chained them to the city's rocky heart. One of the largest barges had already tilted nearly vertically, tumbling its occupants into water already boiling with thrashing human beings. Houses and temples crumbled and slid into the deep. Other, luckier barges at the periphery of the city seemed to have broken free—or more likely been severed—and were floating away on the impossibly high tide.

Never trust a god. If Thesk could take the tide away so Pethvang could be built, it was certainly logical that he could make it rise to destroy the city. And anything a god could do, he *would* do, given time and a sufficient fit of pique.

The floor beneath Fool Wolf's feet turned more sharply sea-and-skyward, and he began to run. A row of buildings above him suddenly collapsed and slid toward him, sweeping a handful of people into the sea. Fool Wolf bounded over the flying rubble, thinking to take back to the water, but at the edge he hesitated. The sinking barges were sucking people down in their wakes, and to make matters worse, he saw the fins of sharks cutting among the swimmers. No, he would find a boat.

Something tore, and the barge tilted so quickly it was almost like a catapult. He noted, vaguely, that the upper towers of the buildings on the quays were crawling with antlike figures. Then he was in the air, and realized he was taking his chances with the sharks, after all.

HE DID NOT SLEEP. He walked among the dead and dying on the beach, among the wailing quick. He did not see Uzhdon or Inah, nor did he expect to. Chugaachik did not so much as whisper to him.

He did not sleep, but he knew which direction to go. He could feel a path pulsing in him, deep where Chugaachik was buried. The path did not lead back to ruined Pethvang, or to the temple mountain, but away, across the plateau, northwest.

Weary and alone, Fool Wolf turned his feet in that direction.

Mind flayers

MIND BLAST

What 3rd Edition cleric spell can be pronounced in such a way as to also answer the following question: What should you crush and superheat to make a June diamond?

You can find the solution to this *MIND BLAST* on page 83

no. 20

by Mike Selinker

Ah, the dreaded chess puzzle trap. Our twelve iconic adventurers have been teleported into this clichéd peril, along with a chained-up invisible stalker. Using the clues (one for each hero), find the starting and ending positions of all twelve heroes. Then show which hero can move to the stalker's square and banish it from this plane.

HEROES

ALHANDRA
(female human paladin)

DEVIS
(male half-elven bard)

EMBER
(female human monk)

HENNET
(male human sorcerer)

JOZAN
(male human cleric)

KRUSK
(male half-orc barbarian)

LIDDA
(female halfling rogue)

MIALEE
(female elven wizard)

NEBIN
(male gnome illusionist)

SOVELISS
(male elven ranger)

TORDEK
(male dwarven fighter)

VADANIA
(female half-elven druid)

CLUES

1. All twelve heroes are 3rd-level, single-class characters and can only move as their chess piece equivalents do.
2. They represent one each of the major pieces and four pawns, all that started in typical squares from ranks G and H.
3. All are in legal, unpromoted positions. The pawns are not in rank A or H, and only one bishop is on a dark square.
4. No hero is within one square of another hero or the stalker.
5. Lidda, a rook who started in H8, can reach exactly two spellcasters (and no other heroes) from her spot on a wall.
6. Jozan can move diagonally to reach Ember's spot (and only hers) from his position in rank A.
7. The half-orc knight in rank F can reach Alhandra, Devis, and Ember.
8. As a rook, Tordek can reach both Devis and Hennet, who'd have to vanish for the dwarf to reach Mialee.
9. Ember, the queen, can reach the pawn Mialee in file 7.
10. Soveliss, a knight still in his starting square, can only reach Nebin, the king.
11. A half-elven bishop can reach only Hennet, and cannot be reached by anyone.
12. The invisible stalker is in a square that can be reached in one move by one and only one hero.

no. 19 SOLUTION

F	R	A	G	A	R	A	C	H	O	L	Y	G	R	A	I	L
T	R	E	B	H	T	U	C	F	O	E	C	A	M	E	C	X
B	O	C	K	S	A	M	S	E	E	D	Y	H	O	J	I	U
A	S	R	E	S	C	A	T	S	C	L	A	W	T	F	N	O
B	L	A	C	K	R	A	Z	O	R	R	K	A	H	T	G	H
A	T	R	E	O	D	A	M	M	E	T	S	N	G	O	D	S
Y	H	B	I	R	F	L	E	X	D	E	O	D	I	A	E	O
A	G	S	K	N	E	T	C	G	N	A	U	O	M	W	A	U
G	I	N	U	H	L	A	H	I	I	Y	L	F	F	A	T	L
A	M	N	W	N	L	O	U	E	R	S	G	O	O	D	H	S
S	F	E	V	I	S	R	J	U	G	G	E	R	N	A	U	T
H	O	E	B	R	B	W	Y	M	M	O	M	C	W	R	U	O
U	B	U	L	L	E	H	O	E	O	C	D	U	O	A	A	N
T	R	S	A	K	F	O	D	R	O	W	S	S	R	R	V	E
E	O	S	P	I	H	S	R	E	D	I	P	S	C	T	O	E
E	Y	E	O	F	V	E	C	N	A	L	N	O	G	A	R	D

WORD LIST

1. AEGIS
2. ALBRUIN
3. BABA YAGA'S HUT
4. BLACKRAZOR
5. CAT'S CLAW
6. CROWN OF MIGHT
7. DOOMGRINDER
8. DRAGONLANCE
9. EXCALIBUR
10. EYE OF VECNA
11. FRAGARACH
12. HOLY GRAIL
13. ICINGDEATH
14. JOHYDEE'S MASK
15. JUGGERNAUT
16. MACE OF CUTHBERT
17. MJOLNIR
18. ORB OF MIGHT
19. SOUL GEM
20. SOULSTONE
21. SPIDER SHIP
22. SUNSWORD
23. SWORD OF KAS
24. TORC OF THE GODS
25. TWINKLE
26. WAND OF ORCUS
27. WAVE
28. WHELM

The quote from the DMG is that artifacts and relics are: "EXCUSES FOR THE DM TO BREAK ANY AND EVERY RULE HE CARES TO."

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EVERYONE E CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Mild Animated Violence

PlayStation

VS. FIENDS

by James Wyatt

"If you cannot flee, there is only one other choice: win. The alternative is unthinkable."
—Sir Thaelven, Knight of the Chalice

Damage reduction, spell resistance, energy resistance, regeneration, spell-like abilities, and the living embodiment of all that is evil—that sums up fiends in a nutshell. Demons and devils are a lot more than just Hit Dice and AC, and anyone planning to fight one of these unholy outsiders had better be well prepared for all the extras.

VS. FIENDS HELPFUL TIPS

- Pin down demons with *dimensional anchor*
- Unleash a flood of holy water
- Do something about those spell-like abilities (even if it's an *antimagic field*)
- Blast 'em with holy power and Spell Penetration
- Use sonic and force effects against demons, electricity against devils . . . with Spell Penetration

PREPARATION

Fiends tend to show up when you least expect them—disguised as the king's adviser, the helpless captive, or the adorable mutt. Still, some people make a career out of hunting them down. Here are some tips for building a fiend-slayer:

Spell Penetration: A spellcaster is useless in a fight with a fiend if her spells can't get past the creature's spell resistance. Spell Penetzration is a small boost, but that +2 can make all the difference.

Divine Spells: As the champions of holy power, clerics (and paladins) have some good spells for dealing with the minions of utter evil. A *dispel evil*, *dismissal*, or *banishment* spell can end an encounter with a fiend in a single round. (Note that because fiends have so many special abilities, their Hit Dice are usually lower than their Challenge Ratings—which gives you a slight edge when using spells like *dismissal*.) *Holy smite* and *holy word* are especially useful against evil creatures, and *holy aura* will help ward off a fiend's spell-like abilities. The *planar ally* spells—easier to negotiate than a wizard's *planar binding*—can fight fire with fire: no one's better-equipped to fight fiends than celestials. That's what they do.

Holy Water: Especially at medium levels, some party members might not be able to do anything effective against a fiend. Those people should carry holy water—lots of it. The 2d4 points of damage it deals is nothing to sneeze at. With enough flasks in hand, it's deadly.

Paladins: Smite evil, at the higher levels typical for fiend slaying, can deal massive damage to evil outsiders. Just don't miss on your smite attack! That said, a paladin's best ability against fiends might be the aura of courage she gains at 2nd level. Fiends use fear attacks a lot, and one character who is both immune to fear and who gives her allies a +4 bonus to their saves is a valuable asset.

Magic Items: Magic weapons are a must for everyone who could possibly plan to use a weapon against a fiend, as every fiend has some amount of damage reduction. Spellcasters can load up on scrolls and wands carrying some of their most useful spells—including spells just a level or two above those they can normally cast (and don't neglect healing spells). Against a marilith with 8 melee attacks (starting at +13), you'll want the best AC you can manage: magic armor, rings, bracers, amulets—the works. Powerful *cloaks of resistance* will help against all those spell-like abilities.

TACTICS

When you encounter the fiend, seriously consider fleeing, especially if you are not fully prepared. If you can run away and return later after some more preparation without serious consequences, do it. Even paladins should have no qualms with this approach: better to let the fiend exist a little longer before you kill it rather than plunge into certain death.

Hold Still!: Most demons have the ability to *teleport without error*, at will. Many use this ability as an escape route. Others use it to drive you crazy—repeatedly *teleporting* out of melee range to pepper you with spell-like abilities or other ranged attacks. How many *unholy blight* spells can you take? *Dimensional anchor* was invented for just such an occasion: Use it to keep that demon still. It will probably be faster than you, and many demons and devils can fly, but that's one less spell-like ability to worry about.

Antimagic Field: Demons generally have more spell-like abilities than devils, but the more powerful devils are loaded down with them as well. It's worth at least weighing the option of an *antimagic field*, particularly if you're facing a fiend whose spell-like abilities are wreaking havoc on your party. Toe-to-toe in nonmagical melee, your fighter-types will probably come out ahead of the fiend—their magic weapons will be negated, but so will the fiend's damage reduction. A marilith in an *antimagic field* is just a six-armed killing machine with 9 HD and a nasty constriction attack—nothing a 17th-level paladin can't handle. The alternative is facing *unholy blight* every round.

Choose Your Energy Types: If you are hurling spells at a fiend, choose your damaging spells wisely. Remember that tanar'ri (the most common type of demon) are immune to poison and electricity, and very resistant to cold, fire, and acid. Baatezu (the most common type of devil) are immune to fire and poison, and very resistant to cold and acid. That makes electricity a good choice against most devils: everything from *shocking grasp* to *lightning bolt* to *chain lightning* can work well. Against demons . . . well, how many sonic attack spells do you know? *Sound burst* is a start, and *shout* is a good choice at higher levels. Force spells, like the Bigby's hand spells, work as well. Don't forget those damaging spells that no one is immune to—the various *inflict wounds* spells—and remember that *flame strike* is half fire damage, half divine damage. Fiends are living creatures, so they are fully susceptible to level-draining attacks, death effects, and *disintegrate*.

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DMDA00

The Adventures of VOLO

LOST TREASURES OF CORMYR, PART 2

by Ed Greenwood · illustrated by Ron Spencer

Volothamp Geddarm at your service, gentles, setting truths of the Realms before you like coins rolling along a tabletop, drawing every eye. I write here of more lost treasures of Cormyr, tales that began as scenes—the memories of the dead—that so enthralled me in that grotto. Please be aware that some dates and lore herein might be mistaken or false, though I've done my best[1] to set things in their proper place.

THE RALLYHORN RICHES

In the days when Cormyr was young, the seeds were planted for what would later become a great vanishing of wealth. This affair involved the minor noble family Rallyhorn—and descendants of the first (and the greatest) High Mage of Cormyr.

Baerauble Etharr
Lord High Mage of Cormyr[2]
(-166 DR–429 DR)
This slim, quiet man came from the fall of Tarkhaldale to Lythtlorn (the elven woods between the Lake of Dragons and the Starwater) to put the intrigues and ambitions of men behind him. He befriended the elves, but they made him (against his will) an advisor to the fledgling realm of Cormyr. Though very bitter at what he considered their betrayal (returning him to the in-the-heart-of-intrigues life he'd renounced) Baerauble served Cormyr for centuries; years given him, some say, by elf-supplied *potions of longevity*. This time allowed him to grow in the Art and led to his appointment as Lord High Mage.

His children included a son, Baergast, whose son Aulard wed Emrylara, the daughter of Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn.

Baerauble was a gentle and humble man, polite of speech and never arrogant (though he spoke more sharply to Obarskyrs than to others).

His grandson Aulard (about whom very little is known) is said to have imitated Baerauble's dress and manner, and to have been born with almost identical looks. He seemed, as one observer put it, "an echo of his grandsire."

Though very bitter at what he considered their betrayal, Baerauble served Cormyr for centuries.

Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn
Steward of the Court
(92 DR–147 DR)
The distinguished, polite, and moustachioed "right hand of the throne" (as Baerauble once called him) assisted the kings Daravvan, Dorglor, Embrold, and Irbruin in the everyday business of running the realm.

Theldrin came to King Daravvan's notice as a quick and diplomatic letter-writer. He rose rapidly in royal service from King's Messenger through Seneschal of the Stables, Seneschal of the Gate, and Master of the Halls to become Steward of the Court—the official who oversees the staffing, provisioning, and defense of royal fortresses (which, in Theldrin's days, was just the Royal Keep in Castle Obarskyr); organizes court functions; and sees to the housing and needs of guests of the crown to this day.

Deeply involved in running Cormyr, Theldrin was ultimately trusted to make almost all royal decisions by every monarch he served. Irbruin is said to have been "lost on the throne, and floundering" (as one noble wrote privately) after Theldrin's death, until he had the wits to appoint Baerauble his daily advisor.

Lord Theldrin was an urbane, able courtier with an eye for details. He saw to it that warmed towels, large and soft houserobes, flasks of fine sherry, and fresh flowers were placed in guests' chambers, for example.

Over the years, Theldrin's raven-black hair turned gray, then shot through with white, and finally

snow-white and very thin, but its page-boy cut (and his carefully-trimmed moustache) never changed. Nor did the depth of the green of his eyes. He was thin, of average height, and always immaculately and elegantly dressed in the richest of conservative fashions.

Emrylara Etharr (née Rallyhorn)
(131 DR–162 DR)
The tall, grave, quiet, and beautiful daughter of Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn, Emrylara was a beauty much pursued by young male nobles. She was repelled by their boisterous courtings, however, admiring instead the kindly, wise, and quiet Lord High Mage Baerauble.

She married Baerauble's grandson Aulard, and bore two children. The second, daughter Narnytha, died young, and Aulard ultimately outlived both Emrylara and their son Obrynn, but died knowing he still had seven healthy children (by later wives).

Emrylara inherited her father's green eyes and raven-black hair. Her bone-white skin almost glowed in dim light. She favored dark, full gowns, and she seemed to drift as she walked, moving smoothly and silently in soft shoes.

THE LOST RALLYHORN RICHES

Lord Theldrin Rallyhorn, the inheritor of fabulous fortunes amassed by two uncles, put his wealth into land purchases, sponsoring farmers and loggers in a kindly manner and always selling holdings for several times what he'd paid for them. He didn't stint on himself or his family, but once busy at court, lacked the time and need to spend all that was his.

Desiring to provide for the future needs of his descendants and the realm, Theldrin had a huge adamantine coffin made in secret for himself, as well as a far smaller, simpler one of brass used at his funeral. The large coffin was laid ready in a vault deep beneath the Royal Palace—a chamber sealed from tunnelings and forcible entry by magics laid down by his friend Baerauble. Throughout Theldrin's life, these spells were renewed and augmented by the mage whenever Theldrin and Baerauble entered the vault to add to the Rallyhorn riches in the coffin. Before Theldrin died, they'd secretly filled the coffin to half its depth with handlength,

inch-thick bars of gold—"Some hundreds of them," Baerauble noted in a letter left to rulers after his death.

The smaller coffin, containing Theldrin's remains (including a black metal rod of office capped with fist-sized balls of gold and inset with many rubies and emeralds), was laid atop the bars, and the larger coffin closed around it. It was then sealed with Baerauble's spells, which caused the huge adamantine casket to levitate in the vault. The Lord Mage installed a dozen guardian horrors in the chamber and then sealed it, never to return.

When Aulard's wife perished, Baerauble laid her to rest in a side-vault amid objects of much beauty but not staggering value. The same was done for Aulard's son Obrynn, though not for his later children. These side-vaults opened off the passage to Theldrin's tomb, but at some distance from it; Emrylara's ghost still drifts up to Theldrin's door, vainly trying to enter.

A later monarch (carefully unidentified in court records) had need of the wealth and unsealed Theldrin's vault. The horrors were found still active, and the great coffin yet floated in midair, apparently undisturbed. Several careful days were spent penetrating Baerauble's spells—but when the coffin was finally opened, it was empty: Theldrin in his brass coffin and the many gold bars it had rested upon had vanished.

Many and mighty magics were cast in an exhaustive search for any trace of where the Rallyhorn riches might have gone, or who'd taken them—but these spells uncovered nothing. (The needy ruler had to settle for the adamantine coffin.)

The fate of Theldrin's fortune remains a mystery to this day. Mages usually suggest that the missing material must have been translocated[3] out, or a dimensional portal established within the larger coffin, affording entry to individuals who physically carried away Theldrin and his gold.

Against this must be laid the evidence that Baerauble's spells would have prevented such magics from tracelessly succeeding.

This leaves the remote likelihood that someone undid all of Baerauble's spells (reportedly overlaid so as to create a web of alarms and traps), plundered the vault, and then recast them all. If Baerauble himself, who was the only being known to be capable of such a venture, did so—why? He had no need of wealth, and no known tendency toward greed; if he thought the gold should be moved elsewhere, again, why? And where did the riches go? Cormyr still lacks answers to this day.

THE LAGARR LEGACY

One of the most troubled Obarskyr reigns was that of King Duar, a warrior hero who held the realm together through years when its survival was balanced on the sharp edge of his blade. In these perilous times befell a matter of missing wealth little talked of at the time, but much puzzled over since.

King Duar "Longyears" Obarskyr
(? DR–480 DR)[4]
A gruff, short-bearded, giant of a man possessed of mighty strength and hardiness, Duar was a great war-leader, sorely needed by a realm beset throughout his reign by many foes.

Duar left the realm larger and much stronger than when he came to the throne, with a loyal standing army of some size—and good training and equipment—for the first time in Cormyr's infancy. He did this through diplomacy and by the sword, adding the lands of Irongates Gard, Jarthroon (both now-vanished holds), and Wheloon to the kingdom.

Duar stood almost 7 feet tall, had brown hair (shot through with gray for half his life), and fierce blue-black eyes. He swung a two-handed sword almost as tall as himself in one hand and a fearsome mace in the other. In battle-legend he stands second only to Dhalmass as a warrior-king of Cormyr.

Jhanthyl Lagarr
(454 DR–510 DR)
The sharp-tongued, spirited wife of Kuthor Lagarr, Lady Lagarr stood beside the knights of Irongates and fought the warriors of Cormyr after her husband fell. She agreed to surrender without destroying an inherited enchanted item (what exactly it was I do not know) on the condition that the lives of the surviving men who'd stood defending her to the death be spared. She found the King of Cormyr to be a gentle and understanding man off the battlefield . . . a pleasant change from her cruel first husband (who spent his days drinking and his nights beating

In battle-legend Duar stands second only to Dhalmass as a warrior-king of Cormyr.

ELMINSTER'S FOOTNOTES

1. Aye, and that's the problem. If "Volo's Best" were an ale, it'd see most use as something used to swill out privy-bowls.
2. Baerauble also carried a cartload of variant titles around on his shoulders: "High Wizard of Cormyr," "Lord Wizard of Cormyr," and half a dozen other stylings, none chosen by him.
3. Though it wounds me to be reduced to the office of lecturer on the most basic concepts of magic, know ye that translocational spells are those that involve movement of beings or items from one spot to another without a visible passage between the two places. The teleport spell is perhaps the best-known translocational magic.
4. We've here spared thee from Volo's long lament as to the unwillingness of several clerks of royal records to let

her). She grew to love Duar, married him after the death of his second queen, Threena Cormaeril, and was devastated when he died years later.

Jhanthyl had shoulder-length brown hair, a lush figure, and a saucy, striking face—several courtiers wrote of her sardonically arched eyebrows and quick wit.

Kuthor Lagarr
(430 DR–475 DR)
The cruel Lord of Irongates Gard, Kuthor was a southern warlord who'd come to new lands to carve out his own hold. His rule was ruthless and efficient, and he brought many loyal warriors and servants with him. His farms prospered and grew wealthy, and he was soon able to import stonemasons from the Vilhon to raise a castle, Irongates Gard, northeast of Wheloon. Unfortunately, he'd built on land claimed by Cormyr, and his castle—seen by King Duar as a lasting threat to his rule if allowed to stand unchallenged—was finished barely in time to house his people as the knights of Cormyr swept down on the hold.

Kuthor died in his saddle fighting them, the blades of four knights meeting in his body. He is said to have gasped out, "Jhanthyl—forgive me!" before he collapsed and fell.

Kuthor had pale yellow eyes and curly red hair worn long but tied back like a woman's. He customarily wore a headband and bracers, was always seen in breeches and boots rather than hose, and sported an untidy beard and moustache. His voice was a rough roar, his temper quick and cold, and his ways were cruel; he enjoyed beating anyone close to him.

Elvrin Crownsilver
(427 DR–475 DR)
An urbane, perceptive veteran courtier at the time of his disappearance, Elvrin's youth was spent at court thanks to the troubles of the realm. Cormyr had then fallen on hard times, with the King's actual rule extending only as far as he rode from Helmstar Castle,[5] and his nobles doing much as they pleased. The wily King Duar tried to win future loyalty (and head off thoughts of rebellion by having hostages ready to hand) by requiring the heir and one other son (if such a one existed) of each noble house to come to court and be raised and trained there. Elvrin was one such; he genuinely respected the gruff King Duar, but he also saw how the kingdom worked with cynical clarity and wasn't afraid to speak of it openly.

Nevertheless, Elvrin won Duar's trust and was appointed a royal envoy and advisor. His elegant garb never varied: He always wore a tabard, silk shirt, breeches, and flaring boots, with a half-cloak displaying his family arms (three tumbling silver crowns strung along an upright, point-down, naked silver sword, on a field of dusty blue).

A LEGACY LOST

In the aftermath of Duar's conquest of Irongates Gard, Elvrin was placed in charge of a guard of some thirty warriors loyal to the crown (some of them bitter rivals of each other, no doubt chosen by the wily Duar to prevent any conspiracies involving the entire force) who were assembled over a wagon-train to transport seized Lagarr riches to Helmstar Castle.

There were some twenty-odd wagons in all, and they made the journey without pause, changing horses thrice at stables along the way—but only the foremost fourteen wagons reached Helmstar. The others "vanished in the night" along with their guards and the horses that pulled them. The disappearance was unnoticed by the surviving wagoneers.

The losses included much silver dining-ware, chests of gold coins, and a shield-sized coffer that held a vast array of gems (jewelry inherited by Kuthor Lagarr or seized during his career).

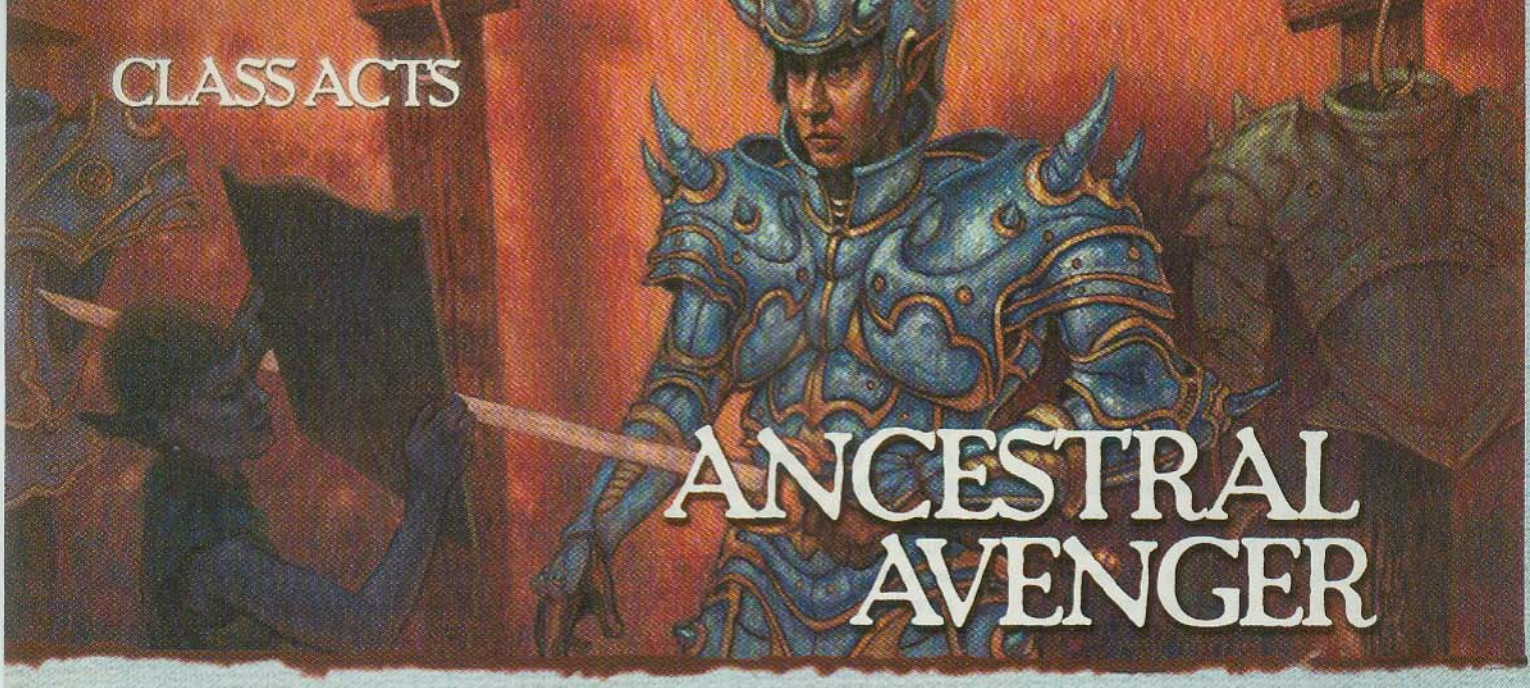
No trace of the vanished wagons was ever found; elves or brigands with magical aid (what but magic could make the wagons themselves so completely and swiftly disappear?) were suspected.

No trace of the vanished wagons was ever found; elves or brigands with magical aid were suspected.

Treachery by Elvrin Crownsilver seems unlikely; the lone remnant of the lost wagons was Elvrin's severed right hand, found lying in the road in a pool of dried blood, still clutching his sword. No other trace of Elvrin or the lost wagons and their treasure was ever found, and spells cast on the hand and sword failed to trace him or yield any information as to his fate.

him peruse writings about Duar's reign, the reason for the lack of a birthdate—385 DR, know ye—here. Suffice it to say that scribes who refrain from tearing pages out of historic diaries are more welcome thereafter than those who can't resist such vandalism. Jarthroon, by the way, stood west of Suzail on the northern shore of the Lake of Dragons, on what is now a rock-strewn but otherwise bare ridge.

5. Duar's name for Castle Obarskyr—a term that came to him in a dream, he once told me. When he had time for dreaming betwixt all the fighting and the ladies, I know not.



ANCESTRAL AVENGER

by Monte Cook · illustrated by Darrel Riche

Most everyone knows that surface elves hate the drow, and that the drow return those feelings. Hatred is a powerful force that can shape an entire way of life. The ancestral avenger is fired in the oven of hatred and cooled in the breeze of eons of experience fighting their racial enemy. The drow might be diabolically depraved and debased, but they still fear the ancestral avenger. This prestige class is limited in scope, but for an anti-drow campaign or an extended trip down into the Underdark, there's no better character to play.

There's nothing a high-level ancestral avenger would like more than to go to the Demonweb Pits where the queen-goddess of the drow, Lolth, dwells. An opportunity for such an adventure exists in *Dungeon Magazine* #84 in the adventure "The Harrowing."

The ancestral avenger is a uniquely elven prestige class. Long ago, the elven race was split by terrible racial wars. Whole legions of dark-hearted elves turned toward the worship of Lolth and eventually fled underground. The remaining surface elves never forgot the betrayal and depravity of these twisted brethren. Never.

Among the ranks of the elves, a secret few are trained to focus on the destruction of dark elves. These elves hate drow more than anything else, and their training allows them to become the most efficient and deadly foes the dark elves have ever faced. They are trained to resist drow spells and overcome whatever defenses and allies the drow possess.

Ancestral avengers are found among all classes. However, many elven rangers who have taken Humanoid (drow) as a racial enemy (one of the only instances in which a good-aligned character can take his own race as a racial enemy), are often drawn to this path.

ANCESTRAL AVENGER — Hit Die: D8

Lvl	Attack Bonus	Fort. Save	Ref. Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+0	+2	Underground tracking, drow bane +1/+1d6
2	+2	+3	+0	+3	Poison resistance
3	+3	+3	+1	+3	Overcome spell resistance
4	+4	+4	+1	+4	Drow bane +2/+2d6
5	+5	+4	+1	+4	Spider bane
6	+6	+5	+2	+5	Webwalking
7	+7	+5	+2	+5	Drowic change
8	+8	+6	+2	+6	Drow bane +3/+3d6
9	+9	+6	+3	+6	Demon bane
10	+10	+7	+3	+7	Spell resistance

Lvl: The level of the ancestral avenger.

Attack Bonus: The ancestral avenger's attack bonus, added to the character's normal attack bonus.

Fort. Save: The save bonus on Fortitude saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

Ref. Save: The save bonus on Reflex saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

Will Save: The save bonus on Will saving throws, added to the character's normal save bonus.

Special: Level-dependent class features.

REQUIREMENTS

To qualify to become an avenger, a character must fulfill all the following criteria:

Must be an elf or half-elf
Base Attack: +5
Wilderness Lore ranks: 3
Feat: Alertness
Feat: Iron Will
Feat: Tracking

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

The ancestral avenger's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are:

Bluff (Cha)
Concentration (Con)
Intimidate (Cha)
Intuit Direction (Wis)
Knowledge (Underdark) (Int)
Listen (Wis)
Profession (Wis)
Search (Int)
Sense Motive (Wis)
Spot (Wis)
Wilderness Lore (Wis)

See *Player's Handbook* Chapter 6, "Skills," for skill descriptions.

CLASS FEATURES

- **Weapon and Armor Proficiency:** Ancestral avengers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, with all types of armor, and with shields.
- **Underground Tracking:** An ancestral avenger can track underground with no penalty for poor visibility. Furthermore, hard surfaces (like the solid stone most tunnels are made of) are treated as firm surfaces for the purpose of making tracking attempts. This is an extraordinary ability.
- **Drow Bane:** Beginning at 1st level, an ancestral avenger gains a competence bonus when fighting drow in the form of a +1 attack bonus and a +1d6 damage bonus. At higher levels, this bonus increases to +2/+2d6 and +3/+3d6. This is a supernatural ability.

  This ability stacks with a ranger's favored enemy bonus (provided the ranger has selected drow as a favored enemy). So a 5th-level ranger/1st-level ancestral avenger would have a +3 bonus to attack and an additional +1d6+2 damage bonus versus drow.
- **Poison Resistance:** An ancestral avenger gains a resistance bonus equal to her ancestral avenger class level to saves vs. poison from spiders or poison manufactured by the drow. This is a supernatural ability.
- **Overcome Drow Spell Resistance:** Ancestral avengers of 3rd level and higher gain a +2 bonus to overcome the spell resistance of drow and driders. This bonus is cumulative with a bonus gained from the Spell Penetration feat. This is a supernatural ability.

- **Spider Bane:** The 5th level ancestral avenger can use her drow bane bonuses against any type of spider, as well as aranea, driders, retrievers, and bebiliths. This is a supernatural ability.
- **Webwalking:** At 6th level, the ancestral avenger can ignore *web* spells and spider webbing as if affected by a *freedom of movement* spell. He can walk along webs as if on solid ground (no Balance check is required). This is a supernatural ability.
- **Drowic Change:** A 7th level ancestral avenger can alter her appearance to that of a drow. This supernatural ability functions as the spell *alter self* as if it were cast by a sorcerer of the ancestral avenger's class level.
- **Demon Bane:** At 8th level, the ancestral avenger can use her drow bane bonuses against any type of chaotic evil outsider. This is a supernatural ability.
- **Spell Resistance:** The 10th level ancestral avenger gains spell resistance equal to 10 plus her class level. This is a supernatural ability. D

HEROES OF THE PERSIAN WAR

by Michael Trice · illustrated by D. Gregory Alexander

They called him the Great King, and from his empire's heart he ruled a kingdom that stretched from Egypt to the southern tip of the Asian steppes, and from India to the hills of Turkey.

The Persian empire was the greatest of its time, and along the great Mediterranean only the rise of Rome four hundred years later would ever rival it in size or wealth. Yet with all the power and resources of the ancient Persians, their greatest nemeses would prove to be a small group with far more pride and courage than wealth and resources.

During the reign of Darius, son of Cyrus, ambassadors came from a distant and little-known land seeking the protection of the mighty Persians. They called themselves Athenians, and they were desperate for a powerful ally to protect them from their hostile neighbors, the Lacaidaimonians of Sparta. Unfamiliar with Persian custom and afraid to return empty handed, the ambassadors offered their fealty, and that of all of Athens.

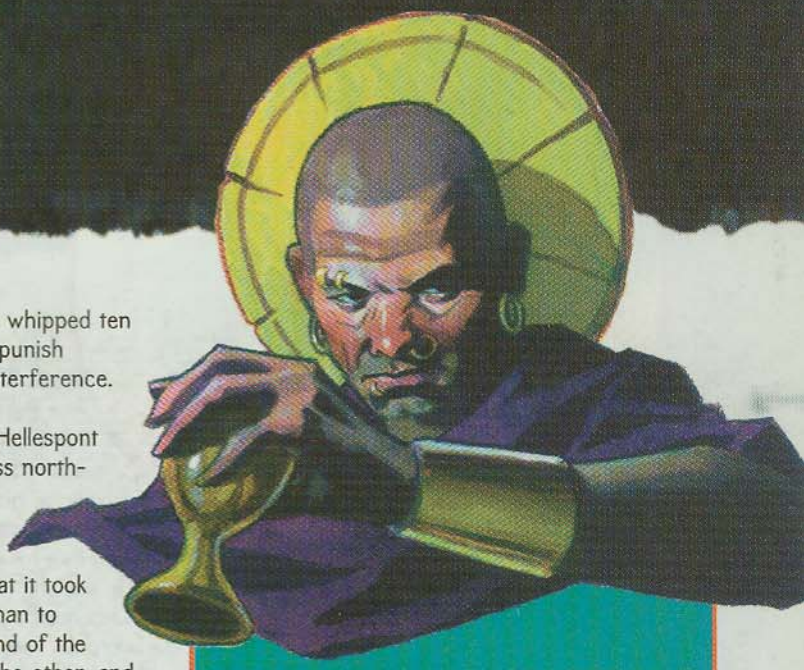
An emissary of Darius accepted their oath in Sardis, a city at the western-most edge of the Persian Empire, and sent the ambassadors on their way. Hearing of this, Darius turned his eye to the Grecian people for the first time. Coming first to Thrace and Macedonia, the far northern neighbors of the Athenians, Darius overwhelmed them quickly and empowered local tyrants answerable only to him.

The Athenians were proud, and they refused to accept the peace bought with their own freedom. Just ten years prior to Persian control, the Athenians had banished their own tyrant, and the council of citizens was determined not to tolerate another. Thus, even though a great distance and large mountain range separated the Athenians from the areas being annexed by the Persians, the Athenians sparked a rebellion in the north and sent a large portion of the Athenian army to the besieged Greek cities.

Freeing many cities and laying siege to Sardis itself, the Athenians returned believing a strong message had been sent to the Persians. Darius responded by crushing the Greek rebellion and sending an army demanding the surrender of Athens. The Persian army was finally defeated a few miles short of Athens at the legendary battle of Marathon. Afterward, Xerxes, the son of Darius, vowed that the Greeks would pay.

This brought about the greatest war in antiquity, a war in which the Spartan descendants of Hercules and the children of Athena fought side by side to repel the greatest empire in the world. The battles of Marathon and Thermopylae are legendary, but Miltiades, Xerxes, Leonidas, Mastigias, Epialtes, Themsitocles, and Artemisia were real men and women—figures more heroic than legend because of the truth of their deeds.

XERXES



Xerxes is a powerfully built and intimidating figure. He has the dark skin and hair of his desert nomad ancestors and the bearing of king. His cold stare and grim demeanor display the truth of this bearing. Xerxes is 32 years old at the time he leads his army into Greece.

Xerxes assumed the Persian throne after the death of his father, Darius. The Persians were descendants of nomadic warriors of the mid-Asian deserts who had built and expanded their empire through war and subjugation. This was a role Xerxes honored and cherished, believing strongly in the right of the Persian Empire, and its people, to have sole dominion over the known world. Xerxes considered the actualization of this right as the main pursuit of his reign.

His father had died while trying to assemble a force large enough to vindicate himself from the embarrassment caused by his failed attempt to burn Athens, and this remained the predominate task at hand for Xerxes.

At the same time, Xerxes felt that Darius had been weak in his control of the rest of the empire. While he mustered forces for the invasion of Greece, he also ordered an increase of Persian troops into Egypt and imposed a severe regime that nearly broke the will of the once proud Egyptian people. The Persian Empire soon found itself in the grip of a true tyrant after years of comparatively benevolent rule.

For four years, Xerxes marshaled his forces. When they were finally assembled he marched from Sardis northward to the mighty Hellespont inlet. There, Xerxes had a great bridge built.

As his forces marched across the incredible bridge, a thunderous storm arose, destroying the bridge and drowning many soldiers. Angered, but not deterred, Xerxes ordered another bridge built and had the Hellespont whipped ten thousand times to punish Poseidon for his interference.

As the Persian army crossed the Hellespont and marched across northern Greece, most cities surrendered at the sight of it. Stories traveled that it took seven days for a man to march from one end of the train of troops to the other, and that Xerxes himself was surrounded by a core contingent of one hundred men known only as the Invincibles.

As Xerxes approached the greater part of Greece though, word arrived that thirty-one Grecian city-states had banded together to oppose him, and that they were led not by the inexperienced Athenian army, but by the mighty Spartans.

Xerxes prepared his forces for the conflict without regard for the possibility of defeat. The Persian Empire was an elephant stepping on a mouse, and he believed even the most ferocious of mice could not stand against him.

Xerxes is the most powerful individual in the known world during his lifetime. Fully aware of his own personal power, and the proud history of the nomadic warriors he is descended from, Xerxes suffers no defiance, and generally no true counsel. He sees himself not as an equal to the greatest of men, but as a god among mortals. He is intelligent, but his arrogance and overwhelming power allow him the vanity of bullying his way with pure strength and force of will as opposed to having to use carefully designed stratagems and sound planning. Xerxes is a levelheaded leader though, and his first love is for Persia, not himself.

XERXES, KING OF PERSIA

10th-level Human Fighter

Strength	16 (+3)	Fort. Save	+9
Dexterity	11 (+0)	Ref. Save	+3
Constitution	14 (+2)	Will Save	+4
Intelligence	13 (+1)	Alignment	LE
Wisdom	12 (+1)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	15 (+2)	Size	M (5' 10")
Armor Class	17	Melee Attack	+13/+8
Hit Points	68	Ranged Attack	+10/+5

SKILLS: Climb +5, Diplomacy +8, Jump +5, Knowledge (local) +4, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Profession (king) +3, Ride +4, Sense Motive +6.
FEATS: Far Shot, Improved Critical (short sword), Iron Will, Leadership, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Toughness, Weapon Focus (short bow), Weapon Specialization (short bow), Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Specialization (short sword).
LANGUAGES: Common, Latin.
POSSESSIONS: half-plate, short bow, short sword.

MILTIADES

MILTIADES OF ATHENS

5th-level Human Fighter

Strength	12 (+1)	Fort. Save	+6
Dexterity	11 (+0)	Ref. Save	+1
Constitution	14 (+2)	Will Save	+3
Intelligence	16 (+3)	Alignment	LG
Wisdom	15 (+2)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	14 (+2)	Size	M (5' 6")

Armor Class	17	Melee Attack	+6
Hit Points	37	Ranged Attack	+5

SKILLS: Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +6, Knowledge (local) +5, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +5, Profession (politician) +6, Ride +4, Sense Motive +6, Spot +4.
FEATS: Dodge, Leadership, Quick Draw, Run, Weapon Focus (short spear), Weapon Specialization (short spear).
LANGUAGES: Common, Egyptian, Latin, Turkish.
POSSESSIONS: Half-plate, short spear.

Miltiades is 60 years old at the time of the Battle of Marathon. His bronzed skin has become leathery, and the armor of his youth has become uncomfortably tight in places. His eyes still contain fire, though, and the ring of gray hair about his head at times seems to sit like a crown.

Miltiades was born to an Athenian family of noble descent. During his youth he served in the Athenian Assembly and in the militia, as was required for all citizens. After expanding his political influence in Athens, Miltiades sailed to Sardis and served the Persians as a landed lord. There, Miltiades became a Persian citizen and grew familiar with the Persians and their ways. While fascinated by the power and wealth of the Persian Empire, Miltiades always remembered the intellectual beauty and political freedom of Athens.

In his later years Miltiades moved back to Athens, having made himself a rich and powerful man in Sardis. Still, he remained outspoken about the sovereignty of Athens and the necessity to protect her from tyrannical foreign influence. With the failure of the northern revolts to dissuade the Persian King Darius from his pursuits of conquest, Miltiades was one of the first elected generals of the Athenian militia.

When the Persians destroyed Eretia and prepared to set sail for the Grecian mainland, Miltiades was placed in charge of the Athenian forces. His experience as a tactical leader was yet unproven, but his gift for rhetoric persuaded the Athenians that he alone knew enough about the Persians to defeat them.

After sending a lone runner to summon aid from the Spartans, Miltaides led the Athenian phalanxes along a narrow valley to the field of Marathon. Miltiades had decided that Marathon was the only direct coastal path to Athens that would afford the Persians a safe landing for their ships.

With a Persian army armed with cavalry and bows steadily advancing, and no sign of impending Spartan aid, Miltiades had no choice but to engage the well trained Persian army with his force of Athenian farmers and craftsmen. Through a rain of arrows that poured over their heads and into their formations, Miltiades held the Athenian hoplites firm until the cavalry ventured too close, and at that moment he had the Athenian army charge the Persian force through the storm of missiles.

By forcing the Persians into a nearby swamp, Militiades lead the Greeks to victory in the first battle of what would become known as the Persian War. The Persians fled back to their ships after the loss, and the Athenians managed to capture two of the departing vessels. This was just the beginning; King Darius would not live to see his revenge manifested, but his son would return.

Miltiades is a man of politics more than war. He is a fiery and intelligent speaker well versed in the subtle side of politics, yet he remains an honest man. The use of emotion and small compromises are of great use to him, but he would never lie nor betray the integrity of the Athenian system. His knowledge of Persia and its people is vast and they fascinate him, yet, first and foremost, he is a patriot of Athens. A sharp mind nurtured in political battle aids a natural talent for tactics; an understanding also aided by his vast knowledge of how to inspire others and command their respect. Miltiades is a gifted leader whose only weakness is his own arrogance and blind confidence in himself and Athens.

LEONIDAS

At the time of the war, Leonidas is in the prime of life for a Greek at the age of thirty-two. Broad-shouldered and well-muscled, Leonidas is a striking and imposing figure on the field of battle. His calm demeanor and stern, commanding aura epitomize the Spartan ideal of a military leader.

The Spartan throne was never an ambition of Leonidas. Being the third of the king's four sons, most of his early years were spent hunting and training for military service, not preparing to lead his people. With one brother leaving Sparta after a failed power struggle, and the next dying in a failed military campaign, the rule of Sparta soon fell upon Leonidas.

Leonidas came to power in a fashion becoming a man who could trace his heritage directly back thirteen generations to the legendary Hercules. When he assumed the Spartan throne, Xerxes was just beginning his march across northern Greece and would soon be reaching the lands of the southern city-states. Realizing the danger that the Persian army represented, the city-states of the region turned to the mighty Spartans for military leadership. Sparta, Athens, and Thebes agreed to work together under the leadership of Leonidas to defend Greece from the mighty Persians.

Leonidas knew even the Spartan army of three thousand veteran soldiers would be unable to face the swarm of Persian cavalry in the open plains of Greece. In order to grant his fellow Greeks time to prepare and gather their forces, Leonidas marched a small force of three hundred Spartans, along with a handful of other Greeks, to the mountain pass of Thermopylae which the Persians would need to pass through to invade lower Greece.

The purpose of defending Thermopylae was a simple one for Leonidas: he would attempt to stall the army long enough for either a successful raid on the Persian supply line—or he would become a martyr for the rest of Greece to rally behind. Either way, he would lead his men valiantly into battle and they would follow.

When early reports from the Greeks came back saying that the Persian archers were so numerous that their arrows would black out the sun, a Spartan under Leonidas's command replied without hesitation, "then we will fight under the cover of shade." Such was the training of the Spartans and their faith in Leonidas.

Leonidas is an inspiring commander of warriors who was raised on hunting and sport. His men trust him because they know he would lay down his own life as quickly as theirs, and they would do the same for him. Leonidas has the bearing of his ancestor Hercules in both his confidence and the manner in which he commands the faith of other men. Leonidas simply inspires loyalty and obedience.

Leonidas also understands that a soldier's duty is to serve and die, and he is willing to do both without regret. If his death will aid victory he will quickly make that commitment for Sparta and all of Greece. Leonidas is not suicidal, but he has a sense of honor and purpose that gives him no cause to fear death. With all this Leonidas is still a compassionate leader. He will spare those of his men who he can. Yet he will unhesitatingly kill those he finds deserving of death as well.

LEONIDAS

7th-level Human Fighter

Strength	17 (+3)	Fort. Save	+8
Dexterity	12 (+1)	Ref. Save	+3
Constitution	16 (+3)	Will Save	+4
Intelligence	12 (+1)	Alignment	LN
Wisdom	14 (+2)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	18 (+4)	Size	M (5' 9")
Armor Class	18	Melee Attack	+10/+5
Hit Points	54	Ranged Attack	+8/+3

SKILLS: Diplomacy +9, Intuit Direction +5, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +3, Profession (king) +7, Ride +5, Sense Motive +4.
FEATS: Leadership, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (short bow), Weapon Specialization (short bow), Weapon Focus (short spear), Weapon Specialization (short spear), Weapon Focus (short sword), Weapon Specialization (short sword).
LANGUAGES: Common, Latin.
POSSESSIONS: Half-plate, short bow, short spear, short sword.

EPIALTES

EPIALTES

2nd-level Human Rogue

Strength	14 (+2)	Fort. Save	+0
Dexterity	13 (+1)	Ref. Save	+4
Constitution	10 (+0)	Will Save	–1
Intelligence	11 (+0)	Alignment	N
Wisdom	9 (–1)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	13 (+1)	Size	M (5' 7")
Armor Class	14	Melee Attack	+3
Hit Points	10	Ranged Attack	+2

SPECIAL: Evasion, sneak attack +1d6.
SKILLS: Appraise +5, Bluff +6, Decipher Script +5, Disable Device +5, Disguise +6, Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +6, Hide +4, Listen +3, Move Silently +4.
FEATS: Alertness, Improved Initiative.
LANGUAGES: Common.
POSSESSIONS: Leather armor, small wooden shield, short sword.

Epialtes is in his late twenties at the beginning of the Persian War. Being from northern Greece he is lighter bronze than most Greeks; he is also a slight man whom no one would mistake for a soldier. He is well kept, with enough wealth to maintain a healthy middle class appearance.

Epialtes was a native of the Greek provinces just north of the mountains surrounding the pass of Thermopylae. Raised in the community as a herder, he ventured into the mountains often and learned them intimately, as did all the people of the region. Epialtes, though, was different from others, placing a higher value on wealth than loyalty to Greece.

When Xerxes's armies approached the mountains, they spent a great amount of time exploring and searching for alternative passes to Thermopylae. While they found a few, none offered the directness to their coastal supply lines that Thermopylae presented. Since they knew of the Spartan force guarding Thermopylae, Xerxes was interested in alternate paths due to the ferocious reputation of the Spartan warriors.

Epialtes viewed the situation as a path to infinite wealth. He had heard of the incredible riches of Persia and its Great King. Believing that aiding the Persians would insure his own future, Epialtes presented himself to them.

The Persian forces had already been locked in battle for days with the small group of three hundred Spartans when Epialtes came to Xerxes. Xerxes had watched from safety as the Spartans repulsed his forces over and over again, killing thousands of his men and suffering hardly any casualties of their own. Frustrated by the success of this small force, Xerxes agreed to grant Epialtes an audience.

Epialtes told Xerxes of another path that circled behind the pass of Thermopylae and would allow his forces to attack the Spartans from behind and surround them. Investigating Epialtes' story, Xerxes discovered that Epialtes was correct about the existence of other paths. Sending forth some of his troops, Xerxes quickly overwhelmed the handful of native Greeks Leonidas had guarding the hidden path. With the newly discovered pass in the Persian hands, the Spartans quickly fell.

Epialtes received minor rewards for his services to Xerxes but would be hunted down for the rest of his days by the Greeks. Years after the Persian invasion, the rulers of Sparta would place a bounty on Epialtes head that far exceeded the reward he received from Xerxes. While a number of Greeks would try to collect this reward, the great Greek historian Herodatus wrote that Epialtes eventually fell victim to another northern Greek over a personal dispute.

Epialtes is motivated by personal interest more than anything else in life. This is viewed as especially evil within a society that views hospitality, personal humility, a community identity, and community service as being superior to all other values.

Epialtes has no overt hostilities towards Greece, itself. Epialtes is loyal to his home province, but he lacks the wider vision of community to feel compassion or loyalty to southern Greece.

Epialtes is not evil in the traditional sense, simply greedy. Yet he would never find acceptance among Greeks, especially in the south, after his betrayal.

MEGISTIAS

Megistias is in his late fifties at the onset of the war. While he is past his prime, Megistias is still fit and capable of wielding a spear in battle. Iron gray hair and leathery skin are the all that remains of his once statuesque build—a gift from a long life lived under the harsh Mediterranean sun.

Born into the life of a soldier, Megistias soon discovered that the gods had given him a greater gift. Blessed with visions, Megistias soon became a revered seer to the Spartans and an advisor to their kings.

While Sparta had developed a rigorous martial philosophy over the centuries that lead to the Persian invasion, it was once a civilization based on art and learning. Thus, Sparta was more accepting of sages and oracles than other forms of magic.

When Xerxes invaded Greece, Megistias and his son went north with Leonidas to fight at Thermopylae. Leonidas valued Megistias's council greatly, and felt the elder sage would prove beneficial in the battle that would come.

Before the battle of Thermopylae, Megistias performed many divinations to foresee the outcome of the battle. In each of his visions, the gods told Megistias that the Spartans were doomed. Even when Megistias appealed to the power of the Oracle at Delphi, the revelations were no more hopeful than Megistias's own foretelling.

It was Megistias who discovered the treachery of Epialtes. The day before Xerxes sent his men down the second pass, Megistias had read in his sacrifices that the Persians would overtake the Spartans the following dawn. Megistias then told Leonidas of his reading, which gave the Spartan king cause to send away all the Greeks, except his Spartans.

Leonidas had intended for Megistias to be among those sent away, yet Megistias refused. Instead he offered to stay so that his son—who was just of age and had no son of his own—might leave and ensure the survival of the family. Leonidas agreed to Megistias's plea, and Megistias fought beside his fellows in the battle that he had foreseen could not be won.

After the battle of Thermopylae, a lone messenger was left alive to tell the tale. Prior to Leonidas's death, Leonidas had instructed anyone who survived to raise a monument to the Spartans who had perished. It would read: "Stranger, if you go to Sparta, tell them we died here as the law commanded." Also placed there was a monument to Megistias for his sacrifice.

Megistias is a wise and gifted seer, but his heart is that of a soldier. Soldiery has given him the bravery necessary to accept the fates he foresees, and enables him to perform his duties despite his prophesies. Megistias views his responsibilities as a seer as part of his duty as a warrior.

Unlike many ancient Greek oracles, Megistias is as clear and straightforward as the words of the gods allow. He believes that it rests in the hands of kings to motivate men, while his duty is to report the truth of what he has foreseen.

Megistias is loyal to Greece and his comrades. He is a loving father and dedicated Greek patriot. The service he has given to both Greece and its people are the highest honor he could have ever asked of the gods.

MEGISTIAS

5th-level Human Diviner/2nd-level Warrior

Strength	13 (+1)	Fort. Save	+5
Dexterity	12 (+1)	Ref. Save	+1
Constitution	14 (+2)	Will Save	+5
Intelligence	15 (+2)	Alignment	LG
Wisdom	16 (+3)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	12 (+1)	Size	M (5' 7")
Armor Class	19	Melee Attack	+3
Hit Points	21	Ranged Attack	+3

SKILLS: Climb +6, Concentration +10, Heal +8, Jump +6, Knowledge (arcana) +4, Knowledge (local) +6, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Knowledge (religion) +4, Ride +6, Scry +7.
FEATS: Brew Potion, Dodge, Endurance, Mobility, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll.
Languages: Common.
POSSESSIONS: Full plate, small steel shield, mace.
SPELLS (5/4/4/2): 0-*level: create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance, read magic;* 1st-*comprehend languages, divine favor, entropy shield, protection from evil;* 2nd-*animal messenger, bull's strength, detect thoughts* x2; 3rd-*meld into stone, clairaudience/clairvoyance.*

ARTEMISIA

ARTEMISIA
4th-level Fighter

Strength	12 (+1)	Fort. Save	+4
Dexterity	15 (+2)	Ref. Save	+3
Constitution	10 (+0)	Will Save	+3
Intelligence	14 (+2)	Alignment	N
Wisdom	15 (+2)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	13 (+1)	Size	M (5' 5")
Armor Class	16	Melee Attack	+5
Hit Points	28	Ranged Attack	+6

SKILLS: Bluff +4, Climb +3, Sense Motive +5, Gather Information +5, Knowledge (local) +5, Intimidate +3, Ride +5.
FEATS: Blind Fight, Dodge, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (short sword).
LANGUAGES: Common, Latin, Turkish.
POSSESSIONS: Splint mail, short sword.

A beautiful, dark-skinned Antolian woman, Artemisia is in her early thirties at the battle of Salamis. She is tall by Greek standards, and very imposing. Her face is lined with suffering and hardened by a ferocious will.

Artemisia was born in Antolia, a land northeast of Greece. There she married a minor noble and lived the life of most wealthy women of her age—that of a hostess. Yet with the early deaths of her husband and his brother, Artemisia soon became ruler herself. A reputation for bravery and a deadly temper ensured that she maintained that rule.

When Xerxes marched through the northern regions, many lords joined his forces to preserve their rule and lives, Artemisia was one of these rulers. Her ships fought bravely with those of the rest of the Persian fleet against the first Greek attack, though she did little to distinguish herself in these early confrontations.

As Xerxes advanced, Artemisia remained with the fleets behind the lines of battle, until the battle of Salamis. There she sailed with the rest of the Persian ships to face the Greeks for the last battle.

The battle at Salamis was the most decisive conflict of the Persian War. Artemisia, along with the host of other captains, sailed confidently to where Themistocles had informed the Great King that the Greeks were held up in disarray. The battle did not go according to plan, and Artemisia watched from her ship as the quick Greek fleet darted about the lumbering Persian vessels, which found themselves unable to move or defend themselves within the narrow confines of the strait.

As the battle turned against them, many Persians ships fell in to chaos, and the battle began to fall apart. Artemisia, feeling that the battle was lost and that survival was the only stake left, formed a desperately brilliant plan for escape. With several Greek ships closing in on her vessel, she spotted a Persian ship on the same course of escape as hers. Ordering her captain to turn about, she prepared to ram the fleeing Persian ship.

Following her orders, the crew speedily rammed the vessel. This caused the Greek ships to fall back, assuming that the ship had either defected or had been captured by a Greek crew. Taking advantage of this confusion, Artemisia swiftly made her escape.

All the while, Xerxes had been watching the actions of his only female captain and had been quite pleased. Amazed at the woman's guile and courage, and disgusted with his other captains' lack of either, Xerxes called out to those around him that, "My men have become women, and my women, men."

Artemisia is a cold and stern woman. Her loyalty extends no further than to those who serve her, and only fear or personal gain can buy her fealty. She will follow those with sufficient strength until the likelihood of her death following them exceeds the likelihood of her death should she desert them.

Fortunately for Artemisia, this is more than is expected of her by most, and thus she excels in the eyes of others. She does not struggle to rise above her way of life, but she is extremely capable of living and surviving in the society she was born into. Her knack for personal survival has garnished her all the respect and acknowledgement she could care to receive.

THEMISTOCLES

Themistocles is an aging man with the air of an aristocrat. At the time of the war he is forty-two. Having led a life of wealth and privilege in Athens, he is clean and well kept. However, he is not physically soft and possesses the strong body, short black curls, and dark skin of the Greek ideal.

Themistocles was born into a wealthy and influential family in Athens. He was well trained in the politics and sports of Athenian life. It was only natural that he would rise to power in the Athenian Assembly.

Themistocles soon found himself as the military leader of Athens during the Persian war. The discovery of a rich silver mine gave Themistocles leverage early in his rule. He convinced the Assembly to use this wealth to fund a vast armada with which to fight the Persians. Heeding his advice, Athens began to build a navy that would ensure the dominance of Athens in Greece for centuries. Yet, in the beginning, Themistocles's fleet met many early defeats.

During the battle of Thermopylae, Themistocles gathered all the ships of southern Greece into one great fleet. Under the command of Themistocles the Grecian ships fought bravely but could only bring the battle to a stand still against the more experienced and heavily armored Persian fleet. Themistocles was forced to retreat, and Thermopylae fell.

As the forces of Xerxes advanced across the plains of Greece, Themistocles went to the Oracle of Delphi for answers. There, the prophet instructed him, "to trust in the wooden walls." Themistocles related the Oracles advice to the Assembly.

While many suggested that the Oracles words meant that the walls of Athens would stand against the Persian attack, Themistocles disagreed. He argued that it was the wooden walls of the ships that the oracle had meant. After a great debate, the Assembly agreed. Athens was abandoned, and its people fled across the straits to the nearby islands of Salamis.

With Athens abandoned, Xerxes arrived in triumph and sacked the great city. At their darkest hour, Themistocles appeared to turn on the Athenian people. Sending a message to Xerxes, he told the Great King that the Greek army was in disarray at Salamis and one final attack would surely crush them. Xerxes prepared his fleet for ultimate victory.

As the great ships of the Persians lumbered into the straits of Salamis, the swift Greek fleet surrounded them and—with lightning attacks and retreats—set about destroying the great Persian menace. Unable to navigate effectively, the Persian fleet was soon in complete disarray. In short time the Greeks were victorious, and the Persian advance was permanently halted.

Themistocles never recovered politically from the burning of Athens and his seeming treachery. Rebuilding Athens and the counterstrike against Persia were placed in other hands.

Themistocles is a cunning politician and statesman. At heart he loves his people and their way of life more than anything, and he is willing to sacrifice everything to see Athens flourish and its enemies vanquished.

Still, Themistocles can sometimes become too involved in the games of politics and his own machinations to see what all the possible effects will be when the dust settles, and his arrogance and self-indulgences are not looked upon fondly by others, in either success or defeat

THEMISTOCLES

4th-level Human Fighter

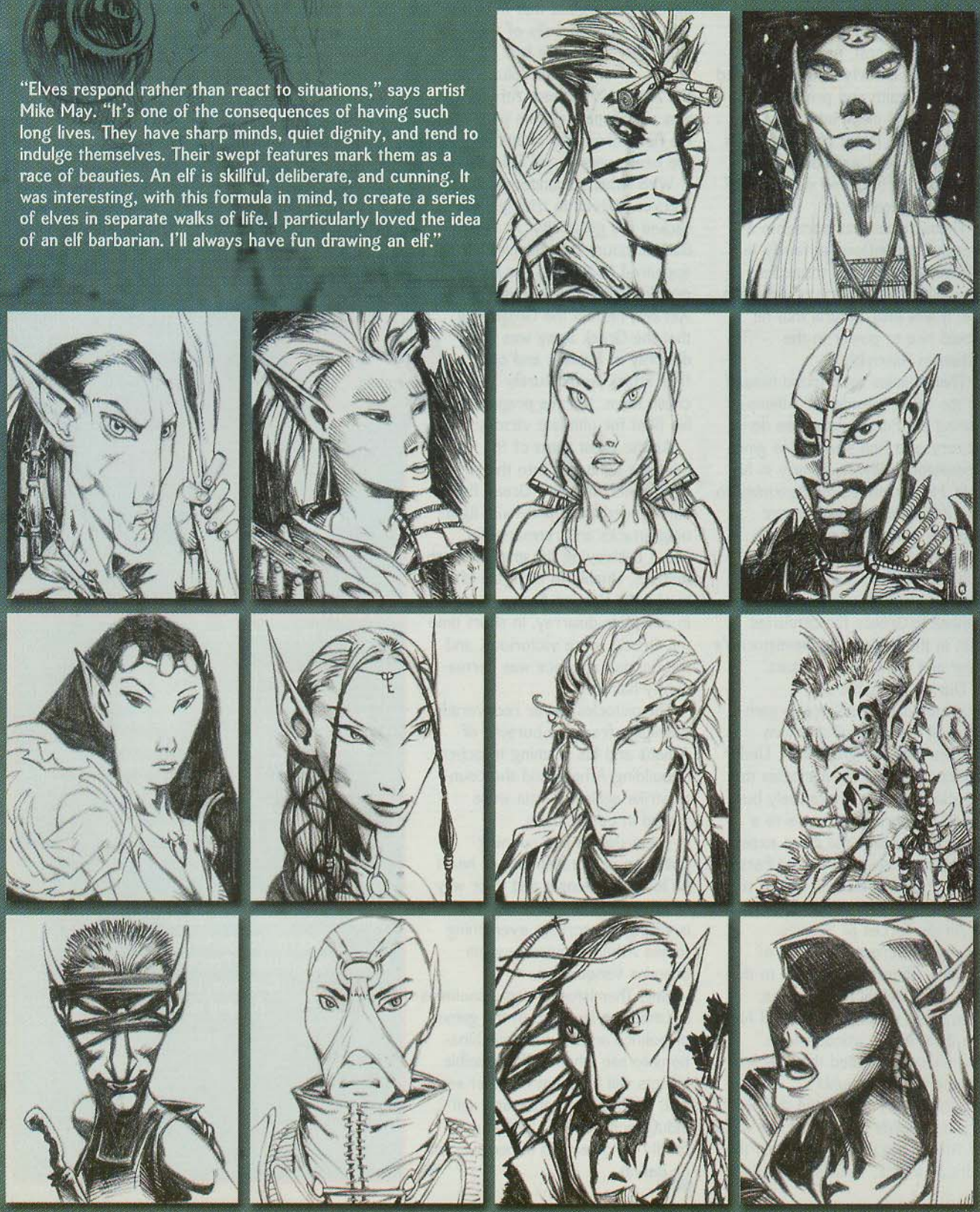
Strength	15 (+2)	Fort. Save	+6
Dexterity	10 (+0)	Ref. Save	+1
Constitution	14 (+2)	Will Save	+4
Intelligence	13 (+1)	Alignment	CG
Wisdom	17 (+3)	Speed	30 ft.
Charisma	15 (+2)	Size	M (5' 8")
Armor Class	16	Melee Attack	+6
Hit Points	31	Ranged Attack	+4

SKILLS: Diplomacy +5, Knowledge (local) +4, Climb +8, Profession (general) +6, Ride +4.
FEATS: Cleave, Dodge, Expertise, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot.
LANGUAGES: Common, Latin.
POSSESSIONS: Banded mail, short sword.

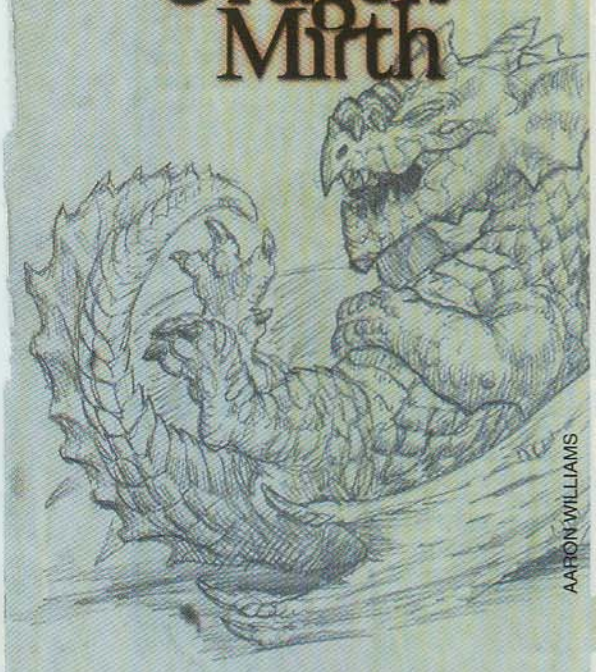
PC PORTRAITS

ILLUSTRATED BY MIKE MAY

"Elves respond rather than react to situations," says artist Mike May. "It's one of the consequences of having such long lives. They have sharp minds, quiet dignity, and tend to indulge themselves. Their swept features mark them as a race of beauties. An elf is skillful, deliberate, and cunning. It was interesting, with this formula in mind, to create a series of elves in separate walks of life. I particularly loved the idea of an elf barbarian. I'll always have fun drawing an elf."



Dragon Mirth

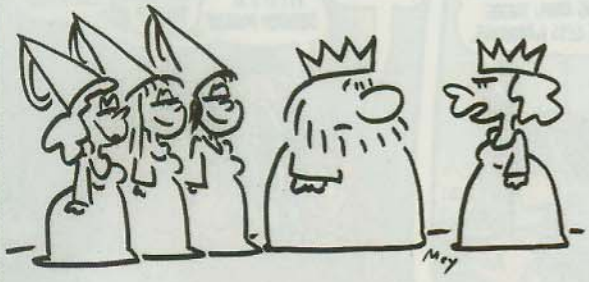


"IT LOOKS LIKE A GREAT MATCH TONIGHT, AND WE'LL BE BRINGING YOU ALL OF THE ACTION THAT WE CAN INDIRECTLY LOOK AT! RIGHT, HARV? HARV?"

AARON WILLIAMS

"The prisoner is thinking . . . that I look like a squid."

TONY MOSELEY

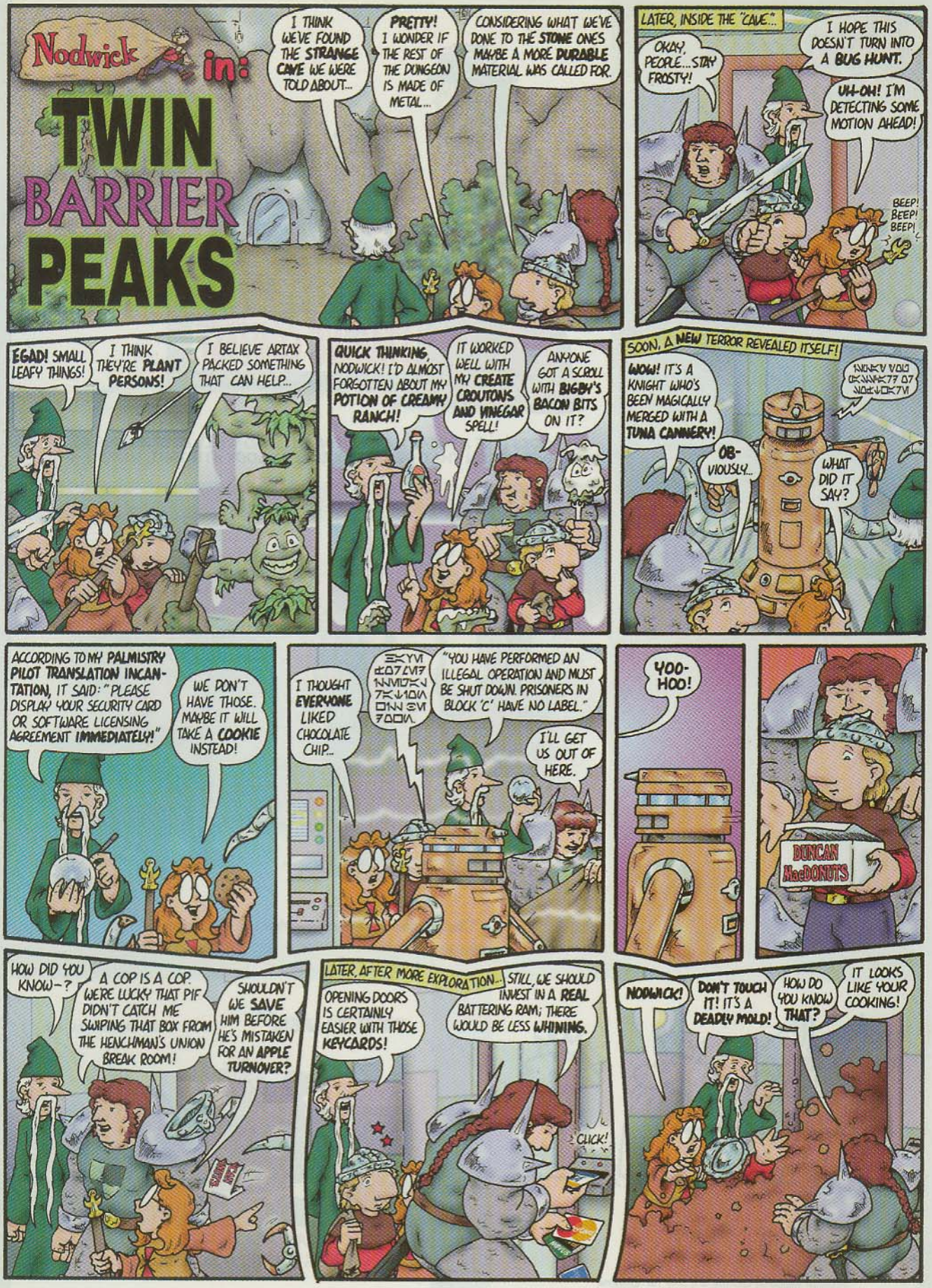


"Because ladies-in-waiting are only for *Queens!*"

REX MAY

"DON'T CALL ME A PESSIMIST JUST BECAUSE I THINK THAT THE BOAT IS HALF-EMPTY."

PETER DELGADO JR.


Nodwick in:
TWIN BARRIER PEAKS
I THINK WE'VE FOUND THE STRANGE CAVE WE WERE TOLD ABOUT...
PRETTY! I WONDER IF THE REST OF THE DUNGEON IS MADE OF METAL...
CONSIDERING WHAT WE'VE DONE TO THE STONE ONES MAYBE A MORE DURABLE MATERIAL WAS CALLED FOR.
LATER, INSIDE THE "CAVE"...
OKAY, PEOPLE... STAY FROSTY!
I HOPE THIS DOESN'T TURN INTO A BUG HUNT.
UH-OH! I'M DETECTING SOME MOTION AHEAD!
BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!
EGAD! SMALL LEAFY THINGS!
I THINK THEY'RE PLANT PERSONS!
I BELIEVE ARTAX PACKED SOMETHING THAT CAN HELP...
QUICK THINKING, NODWICK! I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN ABOUT MY POTION OF CREAMY RANCH!
IT WORKED WELL WITH MY CREATE CROUTONS AND VINEGAR SPELL!
ANYONE GOT A SCROLL WITH BIGBY'S BACON BITS ON IT?
SOON, A NEW TERROR REVEALED ITSELF!
WOW! IT'S A KNIGHT WHO'S BEEN MAGICALLY MERGED WITH A TUNA CANNERY!
OB-VIOUSLY...
WHAT DID IT SAY?
ACCORDING TO MY PALMISTRY PILOT TRANSLATION INCANTATION, IT SAID: "PLEASE DISPLAY YOUR SECURITY CARD OR SOFTWARE LICENSING AGREEMENT IMMEDIATELY!"
WE DON'T HAVE THOSE. MAYBE IT WILL TAKE A COOKIE INSTEAD!
I THOUGHT EVERYONE LIKED CHOCOLATE CHIP...
"YOU HAVE PERFORMED AN ILLEGAL OPERATION AND MUST BE SHUT DOWN. PRISONERS IN BLOCK 'C' HAVE NO LABEL."
I'LL GET US OUT OF HERE.
YOO-HOO!
DUNCAN MacDONUTS
HOW DID YOU KNOW-?
A COP IS A COP. WE'RE LUCKY THAT PIF DIDN'T CATCH ME SWIPING THAT BOX FROM THE HENCHMAN'S UNION BREAK ROOM!
SHOULDN'T WE SAVE HIM BEFORE HE'S MISTAKEN FOR AN APPLE TURNOVER?
LATER, AFTER MORE EXPLORATION...
OPENING DOORS IS CERTAINLY EASIER WITH THOSE KEYCARDS!
STILL, WE SHOULD INVEST IN A REAL BATTERING RAM; THERE WOULD BE LESS WHINING.
CLICK!
NODWICK!
DON'T TOUCH IT! IT'S A DEADLY MOLD!
HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?
IT LOOKS LIKE YOUR COOKING!

THIS THING COULD COME IN HANDY ON LAUNDRY DAY!
UH, GUYS? WHAT'S UP WITH THE MOLD?
GREAT GUMM! BEARS!
IT'S... IT'S...
THE ATTACK OF THE PODWICK PEOPLE!* RUN!
*THE WORKING TITLE OF THE NEXT D&D MOVIE
THEY WERE CARRYING EVERYTHING AWAY LIKE... HENCHMEN!
THE WAY THEY WERE... STACKING THINGS. IT WASN'T NATURAL!
IT LOOKS LIKE THIS IS THE ONLY WAY OUT OF HERE...
THE "WAY OUT" INCLUDED THE ARBORETUM AND THE ZOO...
I'M REALLY RECONSIDERING MY ENVIRONMENTAL BELIEFS!
AN ENVIRONMENTALIST IS SOMEONE WHO'S NEVER BEEN EATEN ALIVE BY THE ENVIRONMENT!
WHERE'S PIFFANY? I'M GONNA NEED A MILE OF DUCT TAPE SOON!
GET AWAY FROM HIM, YOU BIRCH!
NAUGHTY LIZARD-THING!
WHACK!
NAUGHTY BEGONIA-THING!
WHACK!
NAUGHTY FURRY THING WITH SLIMY TENTACLES, DEATH RAY EYES, AND CUTE, FLUFFY TAIL!
WHACK!
I GUESS YOU DON'T NEED FEARSOME DIALOGUE IF YOU'RE IN TWO TONS OF POWERED ARMOR.
I HOPE SHE LETS ME BORROW THAT THING NEXT WEEK; THE TAX COLLECTOR IS COMING BY.
THAT TAKES CARE OF... DID I JUST GET TALLER ON ONE SIDE?
THE PLACE IS STARTING TO LIST!
GRAB HOLD OF SOMETHING!
TOO LATE! WE'RE GOING TO FALL OUT OF THAT OPEN CARGO HATCH!
WHAT HAPPENED?
I DUNNO, BUT THE METAL DUNGEON IS GONE!
ALMOST AS IF IT WAS... CARRIED AWAY.
LATER, AT THE HENCHMEN'S LOCAL #246 UNION HALL...
I DON'T MIND THE NEW METAL ADDITION TO THE BUILDING, BUT THESE PLANT GUYS HAVE GOT TO GO!
I KNOW. THE WHOLE PLACE REEKS OF MULCH!
YOU DON'T WANNA KNOW WHAT THEY'VE REPLACED THE BREAK ROOM DOUGHNUTS WITH.
I HEARD THEY WERE CALLED "MEADOW MUFFINS." THAT'S HEALTH FOOD, RIGHT?

FORUM

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QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What role will psionics play in your campaign after the release of the* Psionics Handbook*?

This Month: Your thoughts on the new D&D game.

In Defense of Dungeonpunk

After reading the last several issues of *Dragon*, I've fallen completely under the spell of the new edition. I came across Rhian Hunt's letter in issue #276 and felt the need to comment on several points in the letter.

I agree that, with the arrival of the new rules, the magazine has transformed into a slick, updated device with which to attract new fans to the game. I applaud the *Dragon* staff for your hard work and diligence. Hunt mentions the "Sheen" article, which I was lucky enough to track down. Yes, it was wonderfully done, and I certainly hope to see more of such work in future issues. Lockwood's art really brought the article to life.

My major gripe with Hunt's letter is the fact that he did not care for the "updated" interpretations of the new character classes and some of the races. I feel that Hunt missed the point of the whole "countdown" and graded you all too harshly on the artwork.

I was captivated by the art and the teasers that accompanied the "Countdown" articles. I loved the cigar-smoking dwarf and thought that it was an original way of presenting the class. Now we all know that smoking is bad, and I won't even get into that, but I liked it just the same. The sorcerer who was presented in your magazine was what we least expected from the game's redesign. It was eye opening and made me take notice of the new class. Therefore, I think you succeeded in doing what you had set out to do. Dungeons & Dragons is fantasy, and each person has his or her own idea on how to interpret that fantasy. Whether it be with silks and ruffles, or leather and cigars. That is the magic behind the game. This is not a history lesson, but entertaining escapism.

Now I resent the "dungeonpunk" remark as silly and filled with a prejudice that does not belong in an open-minded gamer. Up until R. Talsorian Games ran into some problems a few years back, I was a dedicated *Cyberpunk* player. Even though the shine has worn off of that penny, it's not a bad game, nor a bad genre, and I feel that his disparaging remark was ill placed.

Remember that the new edition is all about change and breathing new life into our old friend the roleplaying game. I am thankful that these designers decided to push the envelope to invigorate the game, and in that manner recruit fresh blood and new ideas to draw players like me back into the fold.

Scott Sloan • [address withheld]

"THIS ISN'T MY WORLD," I SAID FLATLY. THEN I REALLY STARTED TO READ.

A Thousand Pardons

Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!

Please forgive a doubting old fool. As someone who played AD&D since 1st Edition, I was less than enthusiastic about yet another edition of the game. I had just gotten everything where I wanted it, a good group with a kicking campaign, and then all the talk about the new edition started, and I panicked. I told my players that a new edition was crap. If it's not broke, why fix it? They (Wizards of the Coast, Hasbro, whoever) just wanted to make easy money on a new system. Yes, I'm also one of those people who waited five years to buy 2nd Edition rules!

One of my players—God bless him—bought the new *Player's Handbook* despite my protests and nearly forced the book on me. With a lot of hesitation, I started to read it.

"What the heck is a sorcerer supposed to be?" and "What? An evil ranger! What are they doing to my game?!" I said with a sneer and a sad shake of the head. I turned my nose up at the artwork. "This isn't my world," I said flatly.

Then I really started to read. The more I read, the more I liked it, and the enthusiasm of the players was phenomenal. Now I am running a complete new edition campaign, and I have discovered a new love for the game. For one thing, the new edition has forced us to return to the basics. What annoyed me the most about AD&D was the volumes upon volumes of books and optional rules that did little but bog down gaming sessions. The new edition, by making these overwhelming resources obsolete, has taken a tremendous load off my shoulders.

Everything about the new game is sleek, simple, and user friendly while at the same time adding new realism to combat and more logic to spellcasting. Thank you for including miniature combat rules in a core book! I still have some issues about equipment, most notably armor. Steel shields are just too much for us factory workers (two of whom are welders) to believe. Any welder knows that a steel shield capable of thwarting any kind of blow from a heavy weapon would have to weigh a whole lot more than just 15 pounds! That, however, is a minor thing. I've even become accustomed to the artwork, after realizing that it is similar in many ways to my *A Tolkien Bestiary* (by David Day, Gramercy Books, 1979), a book I use often to find inspiration for my campaign.

The price of the books is another reason why I have new respect for all of you at Wizards of the Coast. These books, with all the artwork, great binding, and quality paper, could easily sell for $60 from another publisher. The $20 price is great, especially for us humble factory workers.

In short, I apologize for all the terrible things I have said about TSR, Wizards of the Coast, and Hasbro. I'm thoroughly sorry for making fun of 3rd Edition before I knew the facts, and I will never again leave you without the benefit of the doubt. Keep up the good work!

David Werling • Elkhart, IN

Don't Panic—Play It

I have played AD&D and D&D on and off for the last 20 years, and I am overjoyed at the look and playability of the newest edition. The art is superb, and the d20 system is an easy-to-use, player- and Dungeon Master-friendly concept that makes combat much easier and faster.

WHAT BY MORDENKAINEN'S HOARY HEAD IS A DOMAIN?

My players were skeptical about the new system (and the thought of buying new rulebooks was a hurdle as well), but after a single session with the new rules they were hooked! Everything makes so much more sense now! We have used some of the new rules as house rules for some time now (most specifically the elimination of race ability limits and calling nonweapon proficiencies skills instead), and it was nice to see some of our own house rules now adopted as part of the core game. I'm sure many gamers out there have also found this to be true of their own campaigns.

Now for some verbal sparring. I was surprised at the hostility of some of the letters you and *Dungeon Magazine* have printed regarding the new edition. It seems obvious to me (but obviously not others) why *Dragon* and *Dungeon* have switched over to the new edition—why support a product line that already has thousands of pages of material in print when it is no longer going to be published in its current form? It makes much more sense, both from a financial standpoint for Wizards of the Coast and a service standpoint for those of use who (happily) convert to the new edition.

I also feel I should address Mr. Overton's letter to "Forum" in issue #274. Sir, if you feel betrayed by the thousands of people who playtested, designed, made suggestions, or even just wrote letters to magazines about the new D&D, maybe you were never really part of the roleplaying community to begin with. Instead of being appalled with some of the exciting new changes being made in the new edition, maybe you should actually try playing the new version and see how well the new rules mesh together. The game that all of us have grown to love is still there. A simple change in dice mechanics, some new terminology, and a much greater emphasis on roleplaying and story-driven campaigns can't be seen as giving characters "instant godhood." (Obviously when Mr. Overton saw that an 18/00 strength now converts to Strength 23—with the same bonus to damage—he panicked, little realizing that this really doesn't make much of a difference when the monsters you face have Constitution and Strength bonuses themselves.)

Certainly the new combat system is a refreshing change. Armor Classes actually make sense. (A +3 bonus to your Armor Class actually raises your Armor Class! How strange!) In short, if you really don't want to try the new edition, that is your choice, but I do feel condemning it without ever actually having tried it is grossly unfair. I urge Mr. Overton to seek out a playing group that is running the new edition and give it a try; you might find yourself falling in love with it all over again. My only regret is that Mr. Overton's obvious hatred of Wizards of the Coast (remember if not for them TSR would have vanished entirely and we would have no D&D of any edition) will prevent him from seeing this new edition as a positive gain for roleplayers everywhere.

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Change Bad!

I don't like a lot of things.

I don't like the new. Do I think that everyone should conform to my beliefs? No. If people want to agree with me, gods bless them. If they don't, that's their decision.

Actually, it is not the game that bothers me. It is the changes it brings. I really don't like change.

Don't get me wrong: I know all too well that some change is necessary. Some change I can stomach, but a number of the things that are being changed rub me the wrong way. Viking-style

lunatic dwarves who secretly plot to kill everyone in their sleep? Okay, I like it. It adds flavor to an old cliché and can be inserted quickly and easily into a game with a minimum of bother. Seemingly generous monsters who give their treasures to adventurers? Add a curse or devious plot twist and it can be fun to play or run.

Monks, barbarians, and assassins back as PC classes, along with the addition of the sorcerer class? Fine by me. My friends and I mourned the passing of these classes as mainstream occupations, and the sorcerer is a welcome addition.

Half-orcs as a PC race? Also fine. I like the race, and to see it as a mainstream race gladdens my heart.

Allowing any race to be of any class? Some Dungeon Masters have been doing that for a long time. A few race-class combinations bother me (dwarven wizards, for one), but I can live with them.

Some things really bother me: Feats, for one. Why? I really don't see the point in them. So many people complained about *Skills and Powers,* and now they rejoice over this mechanic that is so similar. I don't get it.

Domains? What by Mordenkainen's hoary head is a domain? The more I read about them, the less sense they make. I'm going to stay far away from domains for now, thank you very much.

Exotic weapons? Again, why? Why not just group all weapons together? It would be easier. If the Dungeon Master doesn't want a Western-style fighter to carry a katana at the beginning of the game, that is for the Dungeon Master to decide.

Where are the psionics? I liked psionics. The way of the mind was different from magic, and it could scare the bloody hell out of Dungeon Masters and players alike at times. Fun for everyone. What about campaign settings and other such things? I watched in agony as my beloved DARK SUN died. Will it be revived as a monstrosity in the new edition? What about RAVENLOFT? Or PLANESCAPE? GREYHAWK and the FORGOTTEN REALMS setting will almost certainly be transcribed into the new edition, but those worlds are overdone.

And what is this I keep hearing about no more chainmail-bikini-wearing elven Amazon warriors? I won't have it!

Jeff Dern • Xenia, OH

Flim Flam, Man

Once upon a time, there were two heroic adventurers, Flim and Flam. They discovered a great dungeon filled with vast treasures and horrible monsters. But one day, it seemed they had slain all the monsters and stolen all the treasure. Flim wanted to move on to new adventures, but Flam thought that if he stayed, surely more monsters with more treasure would return to his dungeon. So the two parted ways, Flim growing to be a hero of legend as he delved into new quests, and Flam becoming a forgotten name as he sat, not wanting to change, and hoping to find solace in the old.

Most people abhor change, and gamers are no different. We all get set in our ways and become frustrated when our standard routines change. But sometimes this change is for the better, and I can't think of a finer example than the new edition.

I haven't played D&D in well over ten years, truly not since the première of the second edition. D&D just was not dynamic enough for me. I craved change, and I found it in other games that offered greater depth via skills and talents. D&D tried, but ultimately to me, failed to fulfill this. It seemed a dinosaur doomed to extinction.

Then, in that lovely world of online chat one day, someone told me of a new and improved D&D coming out. I missed my old DMing and dungeon-crawling days. I had played my first game way back in sixth grade, and it was a wonderful, cherished memory. Could the granddaddy of all roleplaying games finally be stepping up to a new level?

I loved what I saw, the things I heard. Yes, change was on the horizon! But, inevitably, so were those who opposed it. Already they griped and grumbled like a dwarf with a dry mug and an empty purse. How dare TSR change their game! How dare they "improve" and "update" it. But the time was long overdue. By the gods, what a change! Now D&D could move into the new millennium with a fresh look! The rules, the format . . . the art! Oh, and the price, far less than the other core books out there.

Still the grumbling. I appeal to all you old hands out there, pick up the new books, read them with an open mind, and see the beauty of the 3rd Edition! D&D has never looked so good. Think of it as this: TSR has not done away with the old; they have resurrected some great staples like the monk, the barbarian, and the World of Greyhawk.

Change is hard. We are all going to have to learn some new rules and ways of thinking. But when you sit down around the table to live out your fantasies with the new edition, I think you will find you have embarked on the greatest adventure ever!

Randy Donahue • Hot Springs, AR

BRIAN MACLACHLAN

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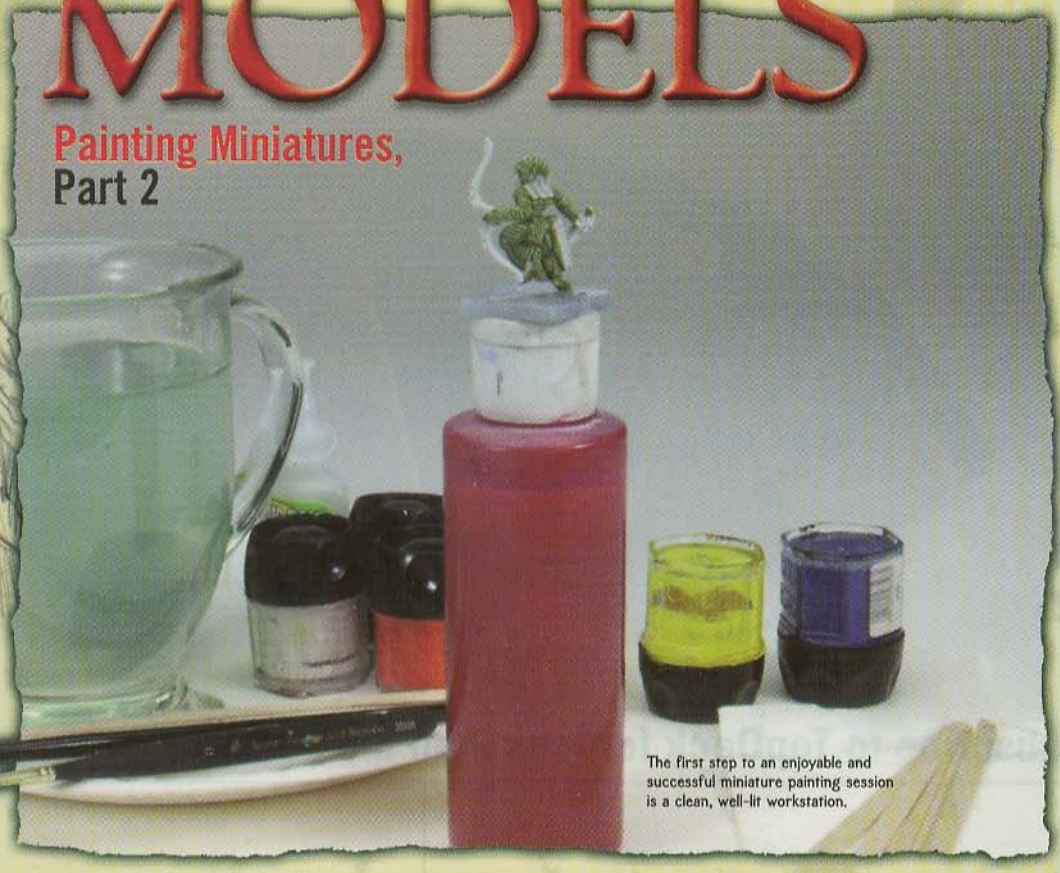
ROLE MODELS

Painting Miniatures, Part 2



The first step to an enjoyable and successful miniature painting session is a clean, well-lit workstation.

by Mike McVey • photographs by Craig Cudnohufsky

Last month's column looked at the basics of getting started in the miniature painting hobby—what equipment you'll need and how to set up your painting area. This month we're going to move on to the practicalities of getting the paint out of the pots and onto your miniatures.

Thinking Time

For me, the first stage in painting any miniature is thinking time. When I've got the piece I'm working on cleaned, assembled, and undercoated, I'll take a little time to decide just how I'm going to paint it. You don't need to spend hours poring over the model, figuring out every minute detail in advance; you just want to work out the general color scheme: what colors you are going to use, and where they're going.

Color Schemes

Color schemes can be as simple or complex as you want, though when you first start painting, I recommend that you don't try anything too complex. All you need to do is to come up with a scheme that you're happy with. The easiest way to avoid getting bogged down is to use a reference.

Using References

Sometimes the thinking is done for you and a color scheme has already been worked out. This is the case with many of the new edition miniatures where there is existing color artwork for many of the characters and monsters. All you need to do is translate this to the miniature.

Reference material can come from anywhere: Books, films, and comics are all good sources. All you need is something that makes you think, "That's a great idea. I'll use it on the next miniature I paint." Whenever I start a new project, I always stick reference pictures to the wall above my desk. These usually come from magazines or are photocopied from books that are in some way relevant to what I'm painting.

Holding the Miniature

Once the miniature is cleaned, assembled, and undercoated, you can begin the actual painting. Many people prefer to mount the model on something to make it easier to hold while painting. This helps keep the model clean and away from paint-covered fingers. An old paint pot is ideal for this; just make sure that it doesn't leak and isn't too top-heavy with

Figure A

Figure B

Figure C

Mounting your miniature onto an object makes it easier to handle. (Figure A)

Your brush should be able to maintain a clean, sharp tip. Use only the tip of the brush for painting; keep the ferrule clean. (Figure B)

Don't dip your brush directly into the pot. Instead, put a dollop onto your palette with a popsicle stick or coffee stirrer. (Figure C)

Happy painting!

the model attached. You could also use a small piece of wood if you don't have any old pots.

Where to Start

For many painters, the hardest thing is knowing where to apply that first bit of paint. To be honest, there are no hard and fast rules. Some painters start with the face; others paint the face last. You just need to be logical about it; some areas are hard to reach with a brush, so these need to be painted before the surrounding areas. I tend to start from the inside and work out. On a character model, I'll do the skin first and then work through the layers of clothing, usually finishing with the cloak. The only exception is that I paint the face last. To me, this brings the miniature to life and is really the finishing touch. There will be an entire article dedicated to painting faces later in the series.

All you should aim to do when you start is to get the paint on the right part of the model with no overlapping or patchy colors. The thing to really concentrate on at this stage is neatness. Relax and take your time and you'll get good results. Just remember to be patient and practice.

Next month, we'll look at the next stage of miniature painting: how you can start to add some depth and realism to your miniatures.

Applying the Paint

There are a few golden rules to remember when applying paint.

1. Never paint straight from the pot to the model; always put the color on your palette first. Even if you are using the color straight, you still need to see what the consistency is like and remove most of the paint from the brush before you apply it to the model. Too much paint on the brush is disastrous. As soon as you touch the brush to the model, all that paint will flood onto the miniature. A good guide is that the bristles should still come to a point when loaded with paint; if the brush doesn't "point," there's too much paint on it. Make sure that you use a clean bit of the palette too.

2. Never paint on, or next to, paint that isn't dry. One of the best things about acrylic paint is that it dries quickly, but ensure that it is totally dry before applying paint near it, or colors will mix on the model with very messy results! One very useful painting tool is an old hair drier; it can cut drying time to a few seconds.

3. Avoid using paint that is too thick. If the paint is thick, it can fill detail on the model and obscure it. If it looks a little gloopy, put it onto the palette and add a little water. I always thin my paints: I'd rather apply two thin coats than one thick one—you get more even coverage that way.

4. Look after your brushes. I can't emphasize this enough. Buy good brushes and take care of them—you'll be paid back with the results you get and how long the brushes last. Here are a few points to remember:
   - Don't overload them with paint—the paint should never go up to the metal ferrule.
   - Wash them regularly. Once the paint dries on the bristles, it's not coming off.
   - Never push or scrub the surface of the miniature; draw the brush across the surface as if you were drawing.
   - Never, ever store your brushes point down in your water pot!

5. Keep your hands steady when painting. Most people's hands shake a little when they paint, and you need to minimize this if you want good results. Rest your elbows on your painting table and lock your hands together so only the fingers that are holding your brush are able to move. This also means that the model is at eye level while you work on it.

THE PLAY'S THE THING

CHOOSING A BATTLE CRY

by Robin D. Laws

Welcome to the first installment of "The Play's the Thing," a new column devoted to making your PCs more fun to play. Although sometimes we'll look at extra features you can add to your characters when you create them, our main focus here is on tricks and strategies you can employ to enhance your existing PCs.

This month's question, the choosing of a battle cry, is a case in point. A battle cry is a simple phrase that your character exclaims as he unsheathes his weapon and charges into combat. The words you choose say volumes about your character. Unlike a lengthy personal history you write out to show your DM, the battle cry is something that actually comes up in play. Every time you use it, it reminds everyone at the table of an essential fact about your PC.

When fleshing out your PC, a battle cry makes a great starting point. D&D characters get themselves into plenty of fights, so you know you're going to get to use your new battle cry at least once a session. Don't overdo it, though: There's a fine line between useful repetition and beating a dead horse. Save the battle cries for the dramatic or important fights. The fact that your character utters his battle cry shows the other players that the current fight is one he really wants to win.

Not all battle cries are created equal. Your specific choice tells us about his personality, his goals, and his loyalties. Let's look at your battle cry options.

The Prayer

In a D&D world, the smiting of a foe can be a holy act. Without the ready weapons of righteous men, the hordes of evil would swarm over the earth. Throughout history, men have called upon their gods to aid them on the eve of battle.

If you want to play a character whose most obvious trait is piety, his battle cry should invoke the powers of his god:

"Unwavering Heironeous, speed my sword-arm!"

"Pelor, fill my sinews with the sun's strength!"

"Grant me luck, capricious Kord!"

Make sure that your PC worships a god known for aiding his followers on the battlefield. A prayer to a trade deity will seem beside the point; an invocation of a goddess of mercy, positively blasphemous.

The Vow

If your PC is driven by a vow to complete a particular task, his battle cry—like everything else he says and does—probably reflects that fact. First decide the nature of his vow. Make sure that you pick a quest that allows him to seize on the plot hooks your DM offers you. Perhaps he has sworn to retrieve a sacred relic of his people or to exact final vengeance on the six orc brothers who slew his family. This is the kind of cry that a character will utter infrequently: A fight must not only be important but also further his chances of fulfilling his vow.

"I quest for the Cup of Valdor!"

"You killed my father; prepare to die!"

YOUR DM: A dark figure with a familiar, menacing stride emerges from the burning house. Flame plays all around him, but he merely throws back his head and laughs, as if delighting in the destruction.

YOU: No! It can't be! We killed him!

YOUR DM: Yes, it's him: Bavarsy Black-Heel! The one who razed your home village, had you expelled from the Order of the Just, and stole your inheritance! Finally, he stands before you! What do you say?

YOU: There's only one thing to say. Bavarsy! Prepare to . . . roll for initiative!

The Dedication

Just as a poet might dedicate his latest epic to a royal patron, an adventurer can lay low his foes in the name of another. A dedicatory battle cry informs us of your PC's most important relationship. Every time you utter it, the DM gets a subtle reminder that he should weave that relationship into the occasional storyline. You might dedicate your battles to the memory of an honored ancestor or other family member:

"In the name of my father, Hemeo the Swift, I slay thee!"

You could invoke your entire ancestry:

"Worthy fallen of House Dinan, look upon my deeds today!"

A dedication can reflect your character's relationship to a feudal lord or other noble patron:

"Today you face Lord Dotec's justice!"

Knights and warriors often seek battlefield glory as they court a regal or noble maiden:

"For Princess Alea!"

If your character is a political rebel, he might invoke the name of an exiled or slain leader, his movement, or the inglorious day when the forces of evil vanquished his cause:

"Remember the Martyrs of Rorrs!"

The Warning

Although the whole idea of a battle cry implies a thirst for blood, it's possible to pick one that underlines your character's kindly and fair-minded nature. Well aware of his superiority over most opponents, his battle cry gives them a chance to back away from a fight they're sure to lose.

"I am Gieler Din; turn back or die!"

"Stand aside, or face the Six Shattering Thrusts of Jara-Nor!"

"Flee and live or fight and perish; 'tis all the same to me."

The warning is well-suited for monks, clerics, and others of a pacifistic bent. You might also use it for a hard-bitten killing machine grown tired of bloodshed, like a PC inspired by Clint Eastwood's character in the movie *Unforgiven.*

Some battle cries change meaning depending on who utters them. An inexperienced character could utter any of the above warnings, even though he can't actually deliver on the mayhem they imply. In that case, he's trying to bluff opponents into fleeing. In the mouth of a low-level PC, the above battle cries would show cleverness and audacity instead of mercy or blood-weariness.

The Display of Bravado

The cries we've looked at so far ring with drama, but your lighthearted character shouldn't be left out of the fun. No self-respecting swashbuckler should enter a fight without first pausing to flash his exquisitely pearly teeth, swish his rapier about, and toss off a razor-edged witticism.

"Ho! Playtime commences!"

"I'll start with my left-hand and see if you warrant my right!"

"I will commend you to your widows and orphans!"

The Unsubtle Approach

Finally, let's not forget that time-honored classic character who's given us all so many hours of pleasure: the Big Dumb Guy with the Great Big Weapon. His battle cry must be short, punchy, and inarticulate:

"Krund crush you!"

"Me kill you now!"

Now It's Your Turn

You're now armed with the inspiration you need to give your character a battle cry. Whether stirring, bloodthirsty, or amusing, it shows your DM and fellow players just what your PC is made of.

YOUR DM:
Finally, he stands before you! What do you say?

YOU:
Hell has too long yearned to embrace you; my sword shall the betrothal seal!

SAGE ADVICE

Need some help with your game?

by Skip Williams (thesage@wizards.com)

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THIS MONTH

The Sage ponders several magical enigmas.

The description of the Scribe Scroll feat says the base price of a scroll is its spell level multiplied by its caster level multiplied by 25 gp. It goes on to say that a character must spend 1/25 of the base price in XP and 1/2 the base price in raw materials. My question is, are 0-level spells off limits, or are they free due to the fact that any number multiplied by 0 equals 0?

Treat any 0-level spell as level 1/2 for purposes of assigning a cost to a magic item (this makes the base price of creating a scroll of one 0-level spell 1/2 × 25 × caster level). For more information on creating magic items and the cost for doing so, see pages 241-246 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

On page 148 of the *Player's Handbook*, under Casting Time, it says you must make all pertinent decisions about a spell (range, target, area, effect, version, and so on) when you begin casting. However, on the same page under Aiming a Spell, it says you do not have to select your target until the moment you finish casting the spell. Which is it?

You have to make all the decisions required to complete the spell when you begin the spell, just as noted under the Casting Time heading—except the spell's target. The process is analogous to loading a gun. You have to decide what kind of ammunition to load before you can aim and pull the trigger, but you don't have to pick a target until you're ready to pull the trigger.

The *Player's Handbook* says the sorcerer class casts arcane spells by virtue of raw magical talent or a gift, as opposed to the wizard's academic, systematic approach. If this is the case, can a sorcerer cast a spell that requires a material component or a focus without using the component or focus?

No. A sorcerer has a natural talent or gift for arcane spells, but that talent or gift only allows the sorcerer to cast a spell without preparing it ahead of time. If you were to watch a wizard and a sorcerer casting the same spell, you could not tell just by looking which was the sorcerer and which was the wizard (not even a successful Spellcraft check would reveal that). The sorcerer uses all the components the spell requires (verbal, somatic, and material) and uses them the same way a wizard does. Of course, either spellcaster can use a feat to make a component unnecessary, such as Still Spell to eliminate a spell's somatic component.

Are sorcerers, bards, and clerics using spontaneous casting able to use the Quicken Spell metamagic feat?

They can, but there is no point in their doing so. A sorcerer or bard who uses a metamagic feat on a spell must cast the spell as a full-round action (or the normal casting time plus an extra full-round action if the spell's casting time normally is longer than 1 action). Clerics using spontaneous casting must follow the same rule. This rule makes Quicken Spell worthless for these characters.

If my character casts a *sleep* spell, do I get to decide who is affected? For example, if friendly characters are in the area the spell effects, can I opt to only affect enemies? Do I ever get to decide who is affected by my character's spells? In spell descriptions where it is not specifically spelled out, is there a way to adjudicate whether or not a caster can choose to affect just his enemies?

A *sleep* spell affects 2d4 Hit Dice worth of creatures within a 15-foot burst; creatures with fewer Hit Dice are affected before creatures with more Hit Dice. The caster can place the burst so friendlies are not inside, but

that's the only control the caster has over who is affected.

To determine how much control the caster has over a spell's targeting, start by looking at the header information for the spell. If the spell has an "Effect" or "Area" entry, it affects creatures within the area of effect, and the caster can't influence who the spell hits (except by choosing the spell's area or point of origin).

If the spell has a "Target" entry, the caster usually can decide who receives the spell (see pages 148 and 149 in the *Player's Handbook*), but read the target entry carefully—sometimes it specifies something about the target that you can't control. For example, the *teleport* spell targets the caster and all objects and willing creatures the caster touches. If the *teleport* caster is touching something, that something is automatically a target of the spell (unless it is a creature or a creature's equipment and that creature is unwilling to take the trip).

The *Player's Handbook* says a spell's range is the maximum distance from the caster that the spell's effect can occur. It also says that if any portion of the spell's area would extend beyond the range, that area is wasted. Does that mean that if a character casts *fireball* so that its point of origin is at the spell's maximum range, the area that would be affected by the *fireball* would only be the hemisphere from the point of origin back toward the caster? Would half the spell's volume be wasted?

Yes. Part of the *fireball* is wasted. No portion of the *fireball's* spread can be out of the spell's range. You can't squeeze a few extra feet of range out of a spell by placing the spell's point of origin at maximum range. Note that this is a departure from the way previous editions of the game did things.

Many spells in the *Player's Handbook* list areas of effect by saying something like, "one target per level, no two of which can be more than x feet apart." What exactly does this mean? The description of the *mass invisibility* spell really confuses me. This spell says there can be no less than 180 feet between any target and the nearest other target. That makes the spell's area of effect potentially very large.

When a spell has a target entry that says no two targets can be more than x feet apart, it means no more than x feet can separate any two targets (all the targets also must be within range—see previous question). For example, the *magic missile* spell has a target entry that says the spell effects up to 5 creatures, no two of which can be more than 15 feet apart. That means that no more than 15 feet can separate any two creatures affected by the spell. It might be helpful to think of a sphere with a diameter (not a radius) equal to the listed distance. For example, all creatures targeted by a *magic missile* must fit within a sphere with a diameter of 15 feet or less. The rules don't describe spells like *magic missile* this way because that tends to make people think of it as an area spell rather than a targeted spell. (The design team learned this the hard way during playtesting.)

In any case, the *mass invisibility* spell has a target entry and a special condition for maintaining the spell's effect once a target has received the spell. These two things seem to be confusing you. When the spell is cast, no two targets can be more than 180 feet apart. Once you have received the spell, however, you must remain within 180 feet of some other spell recipient (any other recipient, not the most distant other recipient) or you break the effect for yourself. This allows all the spell's recipients to spread out after receiving the spell.

If a spellcaster is casting a full-round or longer spell, does she provoke an attack of opportunity only when she begins casting or does anyone who gets near her get an attack of opportunity? What happens when a new round starts?

Taking the cast spell action while threatened provokes an attack of opportunity. The character takes that action at the start of the spell's casting time, during her turn in the initiative order. Foes who did not threaten the caster when she took the action don't get attacks of opportunity, even if they subsequently threaten the character. Note, however, that any damage the caster suffers during the casting time requires a Concentration check, so foes who move up and attack can still disrupt the spell.

Suppose a wizard is in melee with a fighter. If the wizard takes a move and casts a spell, the fighter gets an attack of opportunity as the wizard leaves. Would that cause a Concentration check for the spell?

No. The wizard is not casting the spell when the attack of opportunity occurred.

Suppose the fighter in the previous question had readied an action to follow the wizard, could the fighter skip the first attack of opportunity to make one when the wizard actually casts the spell?

Yes, but note that the wizard could opt to cast defensively and would not provoke an attack of opportunity if the attempt succeeds. (If the attempt failed, the wizard would lose the spell.)

Is it possible to ready an action as follows: If the wizard casts a spell, I attack him; if he leaves I follow—or is that condition not specific enough?

It's actually too specific, because you're really specifying two different conditions and two different actions. The ready action allows you to specify one partial action and the condition under which you will perform the action. You could simply ready an attack on the wizard whenever he casts a spell, and this would allow you to do any number of

POWERPLAY

BY SEAN K REYNOLDS

+13 Stackmaster

A low-level sorcerer or wizard can use *mage armor*, *shield*, and *protection from evil* for a base AC of at least 23 plus Dexterity against evil opponents, because each provides a different sort of defensive bonus (+4 armor, +7 cover, +2 deflection). At level 3 and above, a *cat's grace* can add +1 or +2 more to that. Bards are almost as effective at this, lacking only the *shield* spell.

A cleric has fewer spells that grant an AC bonus at lower levels, since he can wear armor. Once the cleric reaches 6th-level, a *shield of faith* increases to +3 deflection, and *magic vestment* provides a +2 enhancement bonus to his armor. By 6th level, he should be able to afford full plate and a large shield, bringing his AC to 25 plus Dexterity.

things, including attack, take a 5-foot step and attack, or even make a partial charge and attack. In such a case, you would not get an opportunity attack on the wizard when he cast the spell, but you would force a Concentration check if you damage the wizard.

Good clerics can lose a prepared spell to spontaneously cast any *cure wounds* spell. Can any good cleric do this even if Healing is not one of his chosen domains? If so, why is there even a Healing domain?

A cleric's domains have nothing to do with spontaneous casting; only the cleric's alignment matters (in the case of neutral clerics, it's the deity's alignment that matters). See page 32 in the *Player's Handbook*.

There's a Healing domain because many deities concern themselves with healing. Extra *cure* spells aren't the only benefit clerics with the Healing domain get. They get a caster level boost when casting their healing spells (making them slightly better healers than other clerics). Also, their 5th-level and higher domain spells are not *cure wounds* spells, so other clerics cannot spontaneously cast them.

Can a diviner prepare *detect magic* as a bonus spell, because it's a detection spell, or is it a Universal spell and therefore not a divination?

The *detect magic* spell belongs to the Universal school, not the Divination school, so diviners can't claim it as a bonus school spell.

When you cast *Nystul's undetectable aura,* what spells does it protect against? Does it only protect the targeted item against *detect magic*, or will it also protect a sentient item against *detect thoughts?* What about *invisible* items? If the spell is cast on an item enchanted with the *invisibility* spell, is it impossible to detect the item? I have a friend who believes that if you cast *Nystul's undetectable aura* on an *invisible* item, spells such as *see invisibility* cannot locate the item since its aura, and therefore the item, remain beyond the means of detection. For that matter, what does the magical aura consist of? Is a sentient weapon's intelligence located within the aura? Lastly, will *Nystul's undetectable aura* protect the targeted item from spells such as *detect evil?*

Nystul's undetectable aura masks an item's magical aura, which is the aura a *detect magic* spell detects. The spell does not block any other aura. The only Divination spell (*detect magic* is a Universal spell, see previous question) *Nystul's undetectable aura* affects is *identify;* the *identify* user must make a Will save to determine the item's actual power.

Note that *detect magic* reveals active or residual magical auras, not the effects magic produces. An *invisible* character or object has a magical aura, but it does not have an *invisibility* aura. Such a character or item can be detected with *detect magic,* but not very efficiently (see "Sage Advice" in issue #274).

Note also that many "sentient objects" are not objects at all, but creatures of the construct type. The intelligent items described in the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* for example, have Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma scores and are therefore creatures (see Abilities on page 10 of the *Monster Manual*), and spells that only work on items, such as *Nystul's undetectable aura,* don't work on them.

If a wizard casts *shocking grasp,* grabs at his target, and misses, is the spell still active or does it dissipate harmlessly?

Once you cast a touch spell, the spell effect remains, untriggered, until you touch something with your hand or until you cast another spell (see Touch Spells and Holding the Charge on page 151 of the *Player's Handbook*).

When a character casts *chill touch,* the caster's hand glows blue, and a successful touch attack with the hand causes damage and perhaps Strength damage, too. Could a character have *chill touch* in effect and use a weapon in the other hand? If so, would the normal penalties for attacking with two weapons apply?

Chill touch follows all the rules for holding the charge on a touch spell (see previous question) except that a *chill touch* spell has one "charge" per caster level. Each time you touch anything with your hand, you lose one charge off the *chill touch,* but anything you already had in your hand when you cast the spell doesn't count as being touched. You can't have two *chill touch* spells running at once, because if you cast a spell while holding a charge the whole spell you're holding dissipates.

Otherwise, you can indeed use the hand bearing the *chill touch* effect as a weapon. When you're using the two-weapon fighting rules, your own hand is a light weapon for you.

My new *Player's Handbook* shows the range for the *fireball* spell as a base 400 yards! Shouldn't this be base 100 yards, like *lightning bolt?*

No. *Fireball* is a long-range spell, so its range is 400 feet + 40 feet per caster level (not yards). This is longer than the range for a *lightning bolt,* which is a medium-range spell (100 feet + 10 feet per caster level).

Older versions of the game listed

POWERPLAY

Diversified Defense

A halfling with a 20 Dexterity, an 18 Wisdom, and an 18 Charisma who takes his first three levels as a monk, a paladin, and then a cleric is ready for anything. As a monk, the character can add his Wisdom bonus to his AC, giving this Small character a total of AC 20 without armor or a shield. If you add a buckler (which doesn't remove a monk's ability to gain an AC bonus from his Wisdom), the character's AC increases to 21. As a cleric, you can also cast *shield of faith* to gain another +2 bonus to AC (for a total of 23). As a paladin, the divine grace ability lets a character add his Charisma modifier to his saving throws, so this character has saving throw bonuses equal to +11 for Fortitude saves, +7 for Reflex saves, and +9 for Will saves—all before you factor in ability score modifiers for Constitution, Dexterity, or Wisdom. If divine magic isn't up your alley, take your 3rd level as a sorcerer, giving you access to *mage armor* and *shield* for an extra +11 bonus to AC. In this case your saving throw bonuses would be +9 for Fortitude saves, +7 for Reflex saves, and +9 for Will saves before factoring ability score modifiers.

ranges in yards, but the current rules list all ranges in feet.

Note that a *lightning bolt* spell creates a stroke of electricity that extends from the caster to the maximum range of the spell (space permitting). This is very different from the way the spell worked in older versions of the game. In the previous edition, a *lightning bolt* worked much like a *fireball;* it produced a small missile that detonated and generated a stroke of electricity 40 or 80 feet long. The new version of the spell has a shorter overall range, but produces a much longer bolt (300 feet long for a 20th-level caster).

Does the *fireball* spell expand in confined spaces as it did in previous versions of the game? If not, how does it interact with creatures in total cover or around corners? According to table 8-9 on page 133 of the *Player's Handbook,* total cover affords no saving throw bonus. But if a *fireball* expands around a corner like the diagram on page 204, what sort of save bonus would a creature around the corner get?

A *fireball* does have a fixed volume that fills up a confined space as it did in older version of the game. It does follow the rules for a spread (see page 149 in the *Player's Handbook*), which means it can reach around corners.

In general, you use Table 8-9 in the *Player's Handbook* to determine saving throw bonuses from cover. Trace the line of effect from the spell's point of origin to determine what sort of cover might be available, and use the diagrams on page 133 of the *Player's Handbook* to determine the degree of cover. There's no saving throw bonus listed for total cover because if you have total cover against a spell, the spell can't affect you at all.

When you're hit by a spread, you cannot claim total cover if the spell's effect can reach you somehow. Determine the degree of cover by how small a constriction the spread has to pass through to reach you. For example, if you're peering around the corner when a *fireball* hits, the best you can claim is one-quarter cover. If you're completely behind the corner, but otherwise in the open, the best you can claim is one-half cover. If you're around a corner and halfway behind a door, you can claim three-quarters cover. If the fireball comes at you through an arrow slit, you can claim nine-tenths cover.

POWERPLAY

Continual Flame *Tricks*

As a source of light that doesn't give off heat, *continual flame* is a great spell for adventurers. If cast on the end of a rope, it can be lowered into a pit to provide light and determine depth, and (unlike a thrown item with light) it can be easily retrieved in these circumstances. The flame-rope isn't extinguished if lowered into water, either. If the "burning" end is tied around someone's waist as a safety line, it leaves her hands free to fight or grab treasure. If cast upon a weapon, it appears to be a flaming weapon, although it causes no extra damage—impressive, intimidating to trolls who don't know better, and likely to cause enemies to waste defensive spells and items in anticipation of fire damage.

Older editions of the game listed the *silence* spell in the Alteration school, but now *silence* is part of the Illusion school. Does this mean that anyone in the area of effect can try to disbelieve the spell, negating most of its effect for enemy spellcasters?

If you could disbelieve a *silence* spell, its save listing would be "Will disbelief." *Silence* removes all noise in its area and nobody gets a save against that. If the spell is actually targeted on a creature or on a creature's equipment, that creature gets a Will save to negate the spell. If the save succeeds, the spell fails and the area is not silenced.

Gamer's Guide

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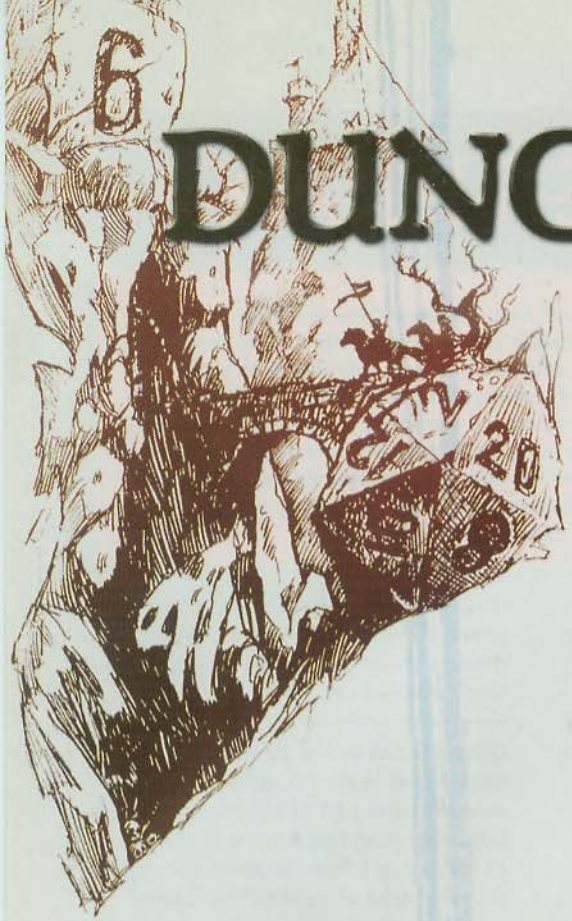

DUNGEONCRAFT

by Ray Winninger

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Many of the rules changes introduced in the new edition ripple outward from a new approach to character creation. As I noted last month, the real heart of the new edition's philosophy is a move toward providing concrete rules for a greater number of actions and situations. Where previous editions of the game forced the DM to guess or make an arbitrary ruling whenever the players attempted an unusual action, this new version provides an open-ended set of specific rules that can be used to resolve almost any situation. Want to trick a guard into releasing your friend the thief? Make a Bluff check. Trying to hunt for enough game to feed your party? Make a Wilderness Lore check. In short, the new rules handle many more situations by giving each character a wider range of abilities to check.

One byproduct of this new philosophy is that character creation can be a lengthier process than it was during previous editions of the game, though the final results are considerably more detailed and interesting. Properly selecting and collating all those new abilities certainly takes time. The designers have provided detailed, pre-generated character templates you can ask your players to select in order to save time, but I recommend that you use them only if your players are rather inexperienced. While the "starting packages" certainly save you a little time, they'll also make it more difficult for your players to truly personalize their characters and grow attached to them.

Character creation can be a lengthier process than it was during previous editions.

In fact, character generation has been beefed up so much that I think it's appropriate to reconsider some advice I provided in an earlier column. I now believe it is good idea to hold a separate session for the sole purpose of creating characters. I used to recommend against this practice because my experience shows that campaigns that begin in this fashion tend to have a fifty-fifty chance of never getting off the ground at all. Generally, the play maintains the interest of your fellow gamers, and any session during which you don't actually play is just another chance for one or more players to lose interest. Under the new rules, though, it's difficult to conduct an effective session long enough to allow all the players to create their characters with enough time left over to get a good start on the first adventure. Players who are experienced with the new rules might pull off such a feat without a problem, but there aren't too many people out there who are all that experienced with a set of rules that's a few months old.

One way to avoid this dilemma altogether is to ask your players to show up at the first session with their characters already created. While this works well for some people, I generally don't favor it for a number of reasons. Having all the players in a single location while they create their characters definitely results in a more effective

and well-balanced party. The D&D rules and most D&D adventures assume that the adventuring party will be made up of a variety of character classes. If the players don't cooperate as they create their characters, it's far too easy to end up with a weak or unwieldy party. In fact, this risk is somewhat compounded under the new rules—it's now important that your players select not only a variety of character classes, but a variety of skills as well. A party without a single character who possesses the Bluff or Spot skills, for instance, might run into trouble. Another reason why it's often not a good idea to ask the players to create their characters on their own is the fact that players can easily make mistakes during the process. If you and the other players aren't around to notice some of these discrepancies, you run the risk of not spotting an error until it's already had an unfortunate impact on your game. During a recent session of my own game, for example, I discovered that one of my players accidentally spent too many skill points at first level, making him much more effective in my first few adventures than he should have been.

If you do decide to run a special session for character creation, there are a couple of strategies you might use to get your players' juices flowing despite the fact that the game isn't actually starting yet. If your players are particularly creative and oriented toward good roleplaying, you might ask each of them to create a brief "life story" for his or her character and relate it to the whole group. In order to keep things interesting, you can ask the players to judge the tales after all the stories have been told. Pass out score cards that instruct each player to secretly rate each story on a scale of one to ten. After you collect and tally the scores, you can bestow a special prize upon the winner ranging from a few additional skill points all the way up to the privilege of beginning play at 2nd level. This scheme has the added benefit of not only making that first session a bit more interesting for the players but also going a long way toward establishing their characters as well.

Another ploy you might try is the old "cliffhanger trick." Start playing during the character creation session, but don't attempt to undertake an actual adventure. Instead, run the players through a quick teaser designed to get them hooked and interested in the things to come. A quick combat encounter that gives the players a chance to test out their new abilities is usually in order here, along with some brief exposure to your campaign environment. Most importantly, though, you should try to end the teaser with some sort of shock or twist. Get the players hooked by confronting them with a compelling mystery or puzzle that won't be resolved until the next session. For example, your teaser might end with a hooded assassin murdering an important townsman right in front of the party. The adventurers give chase, but fail to catch the fiend. Just before he makes good his escape, though, the assassin's hood is torn off and the PCs are shocked and horrified by what they see. You don't reveal exactly what that is until the next session.

Note that if you decide to go this route, it's important that you actually deliver on the mystery you created during the teaser. If you capture the player's imagination but then fail to invent a revelation that lives up to the dramatic buildup you've given the situation, you'll only do more harm than good. Returning to my example, for instance, it's probably not enough to simply reveal that what the players found so shocking was an ugly face or a bad scar. Instead, you might reveal that the assassin is inexplicably an exact duplicate of a player character, or that the assassin is an old friend whom the PCs believed to be dead. This sort of solution provides you with a great springboard for adventures that allow the players to uncover further revelations and delve even deeper into the mystery.

Newfangled Fighting

Like character creation, the new combat rules are home to many of the new edition's innovations. In general, combat is more stringently codified and the various actions the combatants can select are more rigidly defined. It's still possible to run a battle entirely within the imaginations of the participants, but doing so definitely makes it harder to effectively wield all the interesting new maneuvers that the new rules have to offer. Now more than ever, I recommend employing some sort of counters or visual aids to track the positions of characters in battle. Detailed miniatures and scenery are obviously the ideal tools for this purpose, but not everybody has the time or money to invest in building an appropriate collection. In an earlier column, I suggested using a large whiteboard in lieu of miniatures to map out your battles. The idea is that you can quickly draw up battle maps on the board using dry erase markers, and plot the players' positions using makeshift tokens like coins or dice. The board also gives you a convenient way to record the positions and effects of spells and obstacles. Should a wizard cast *wall of ice*, for instance, you can quickly sketch the ice wall right on the battle map and even record a helpful note right next to it ("36 hp/10 ft., Break DC 27).

If miniatures are too costly or time-consuming, try using a large white-board to map out your battles.

While the new rules make the whiteboard approach more useful than ever, they also add an additional wrinkle that you should consider. Many of the new combat rules become much easier to administer if a grid is overlaid atop the battlefield to designate 5-foot by 5-foot squares. Such a grid will make it much easier to keep track of the "threatened areas" that provoke attacks of opportunity (*Player's Handbook*, page 122) and easier to adjudicate various movements and special maneuvers. In fact, the new *Dungeon Master's Guide* provides some detailed guidelines on how to employ a grid on pages 67-69. Unfortunately, redrawing a grid on your whiteboard at the beginning of each battle isn't very

practical. I've skirted this problem by using a box cutter to lightly scratch a 1-inch square grid directly into the surface of my whiteboard, allowing me to draw on the board and erase to my heart's content without ever removing the grid. You can also add a permanent grid to your battle board with very thin black or gray tape (available at office supply stores).

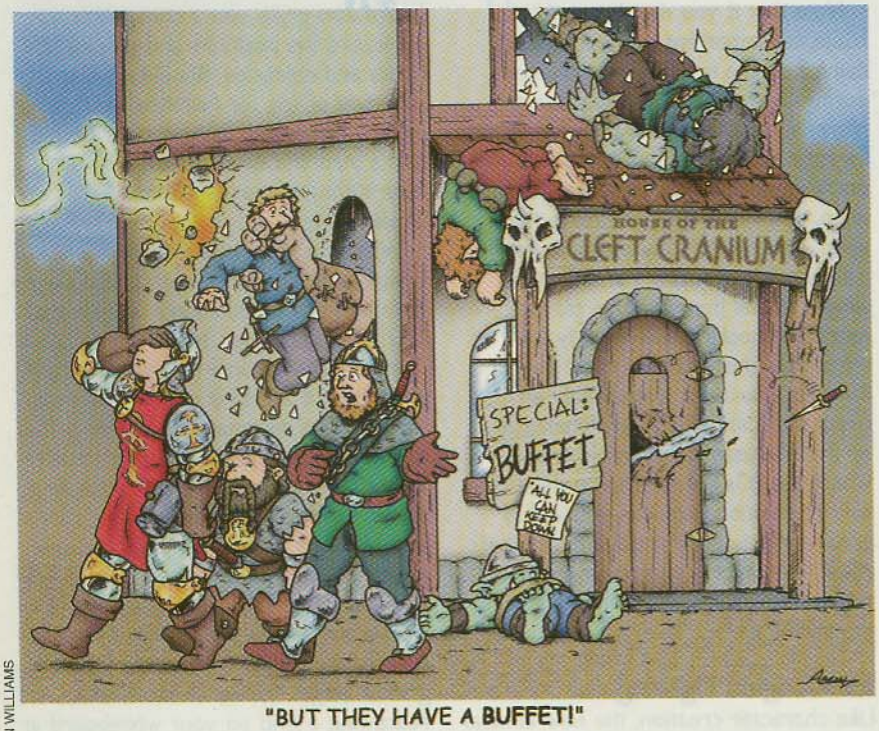
Beyond the more rigidly defined actions, the most important changes in the combat rules are the various measures taken to clean up some of the awkward mathematics that sometimes plagued earlier editions. In addition to fixing the obvious problems that frequently befuddled newcomers ("Now, let me get this straight . . . a -1 shield actually *adds* one to my Armor Class?"), the new rules also eliminate some of their predecessor's cumbersome charts and formulae. While the old game forced you to repeatedly look up what a 3-Hit-Die creature needs to hit Armor Class 5, for example, the new system makes such calculations irrelevant. Of course, some of the trimmed complexity has been reintroduced in the form of new modifiers and options, but it's generally easy for the players to keep track of their own bonuses and modifiers, allowing you to concentrate solely on the monsters and NPCs. It's also easier than ever to conceal the Armor Classes of your monsters. Now, just ask each player for a total attack roll. If the roll equals or exceeds the monster's Armor Class, the attack is a hit. The players need never know what they're shooting for.

Equally worthy of attention is the new initiative system. Before, all the combatants on one side of the battle took a turn, then all the combatants on the other side took their turns. A single simple die roll decided which side went first. Now each character rolls his own personal initiative score. Although this system produces more interesting battles, it's sometimes hard to calculate the exact sequence in which all the combatants act, particularly when you're resolving a large battle with a wide variety of participants. To minimize your difficulties, you should closely follow the advice that appears in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and scribble down a quick sequence at the start of each combat round. I'm experimenting with my own system that is even faster, though it certainly requires some advance preparation. I've created an "initiative board" on a small (8 ½ inch by 11 inch) piece of corkboard. With a marker, I've divided the board into two rows of twenty columns and numbered the resulting squares from one to forty. I've also labeled a set of pushpins with the initials of my PCs and reserved a few extra pushpins of different colors to represent monsters. At the start of the round, when everyone rolls initiative, I can simply place the pushpins in the appropriate squares to quickly log the combat sequence, sparing me from the sometimes difficult task of scrawling down notes while eight players are simultaneously shouting their initiative scores. Later, I can place additional pushpins on the board to represent the timing of spells and other effects.

Beyond these simple mechanical matters, the one thing about the new combat rules that every DM should note is that they can be much more brutal than their predecessors, particularly at low character levels. An orc with a battleaxe can now inflict a maximum of 30 points of damage in a single attack (orcs have a Strength of 15, and a battleaxe inflicts triple damage on a critical hit)—more than enough to kill all 1st- and most 2nd-level characters outright. Under the old edition, the same beastie could never inflict more than 8 points of damage—not enough to kill any PC in a single blow (if you used the optional "death's door" rule). While the circumstances that produce such extreme combat results are certainly quite rare, it's important to remember just how many battles the average PC will engage in across the course of his career and how many opportunities the monsters get to make such a devastating attack.

The upshot of all this is that you should follow the advice in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* very carefully when it comes to balancing your fights. Until you've gained experience with the new rules, you should mistrust any "conventional wisdom" you acquired playing the old game, particularly while your players' characters are at low levels.

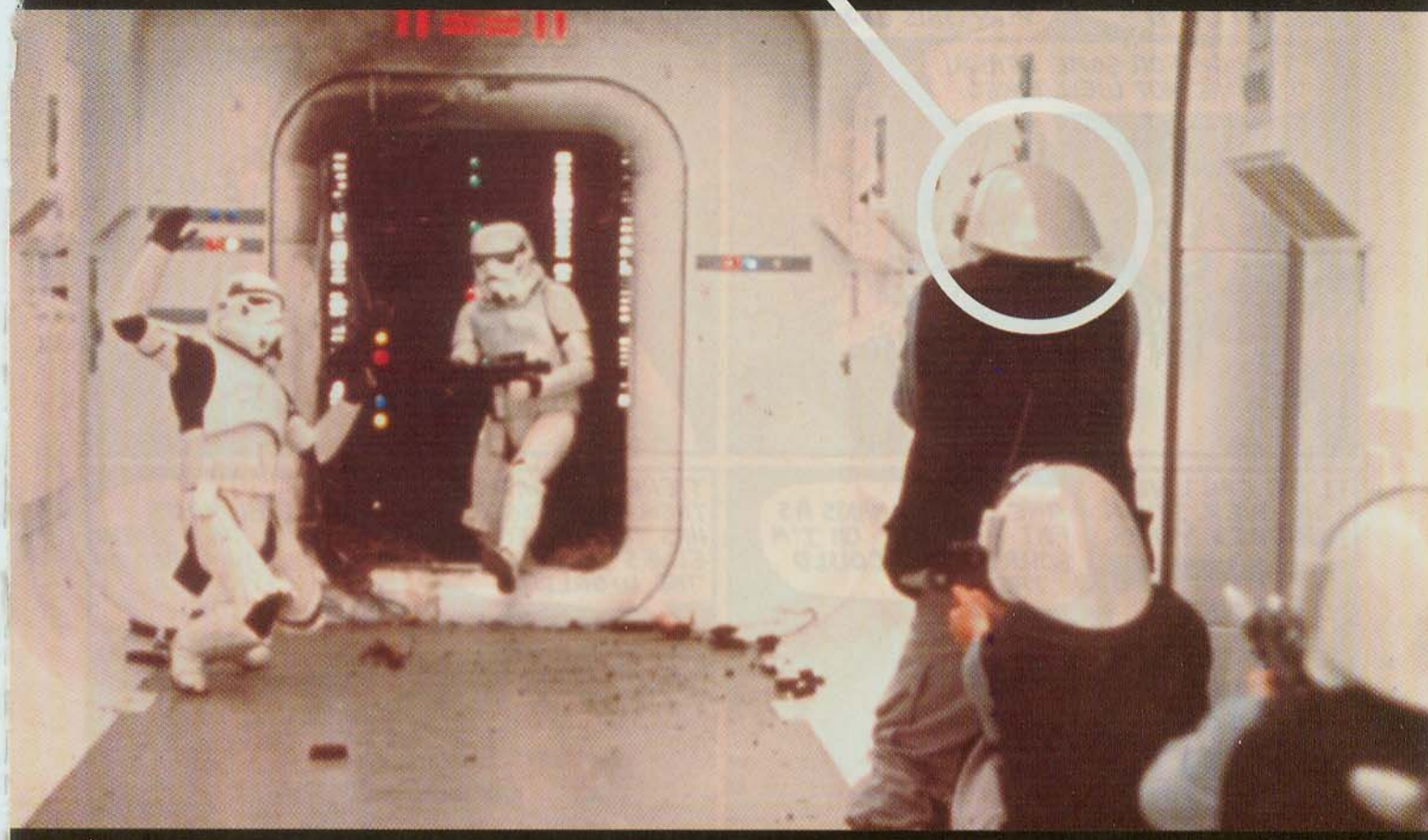
That wraps up another installment. Drop back in thirty days to watch me raise the curtain on a whole new phase of Dungeoncraft.



AARON WILLIAMS

"BUT THEY HAVE A BUFFET!"

WHAT'S THIS GUY'S STORY?



Your life is resistance. The Empire took everything from you but this. So be it. You will live. You will fight. Until the Empire takes it all.

Sleek and streamlined, the new *Star Wars*® roleplaying game holds a universe of possibilities for fans of every era. The *D20 system* captures all of the action and heroism of the classic trilogy and paves the way for new adventures set in Episode I.

More depth. More skills and feats.
More Force powers. More *Star Wars*.

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STAR WARS®

ROLEPLAYING GAME

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WHAT'S NEW
WITH PHIL AND DIXIE
TODAY WE'RE TALKING ABOUT ELVES - ONE OF THE MORE VENERABLE RACES IN D&D -
DO ALL HUMANS WHO CAN'T GET GIRLFRIENDS PLAY THIS "D&D?"
THOUGH FOR SOME REASON, THEY'RE NOT WELL LIKED.
THIS IS A CONUNDRUM, AS ELVES ARE AESTHETICALLY PLEASING, KNOWLEDGEABLE, AND QUICK-WITTED.
DO ALL HUMANS SPIT WHEN THEY TALK?
SNAP!
ELVES CAN LIVE FOR OVER SEVEN HUNDRED YEARS.
ARE ALL HUMANS AS FAT AS YOU? OH I'M SORRY - HOW COULD THEY BE?
- THOUGH SURPRISINGLY FEW DO.
THEREFORE, WITH ALL THEIR ADVANTAGES, ONE HAS TO WONDER WHY ELVES DON'T RULE THE WORLD?
DO ALL HUMANS SUBLIMATE THEIR SEXUAL INADEQUACIES THROUGH TAWDRY POLITICAL POWER FANTASIES?
THE ANSWER, OF COURSE, IS THAT EVERY SPECIES HAS A "PRINCIPAL PREDATOR" THAT KEEPS IT IN CHECK.
WHAT?! NO!
SLAM!
AH-HA! I KNEW I SMELLED "ELF!"
LET'S GO, "TOY BOY", YOU GOT POKÉMON TO MAKE! HO HO HO!
PLEASE, LONELY, SPITTING, FAT MAN - HELP MEEE!
TALK TO ME AFTER I GET MY X-MAS SHOPPING DONE.
16
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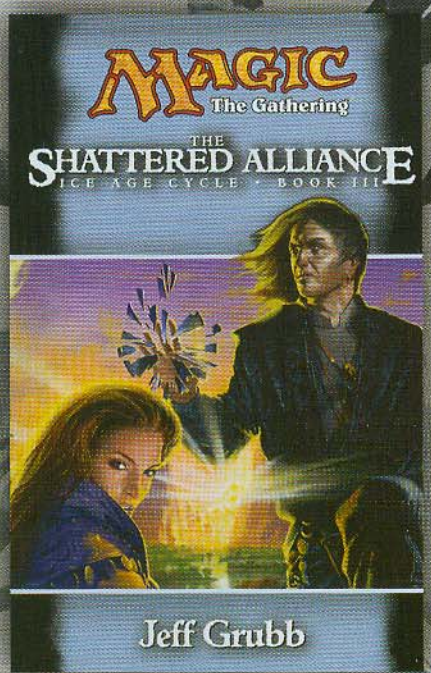
HRRG!
END

BREAK THE ICE



The glaciers of Dominaria are receding, and the Ice Age has come to an abrupt end. But even as the temperature rises, the world's troubles begin anew.

Also Available

Wizards of the Coast

www.wizards.com/Magic

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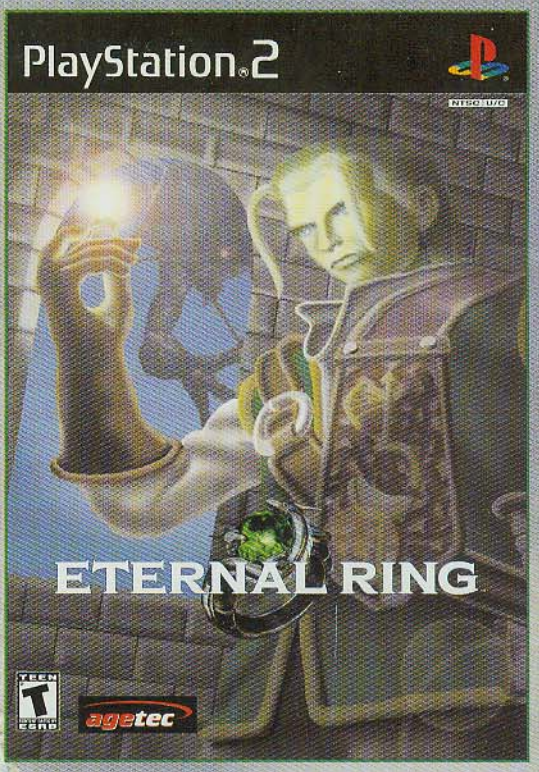
WHO SAID FANTASIES HAD TO BE FINAL?



"WONDERFUL VISUALS OF AN EXPANSIVE NEW ENVIRONMENT TEEMING WITH FANCIFUL MAGIC AND FASCINATING MONSTERS."

– GAMER'S REPUBLIC

A young magician is sent by his King to investigate the strange happenings on the Island of No Return. Armed with his sword and his natural talent as a sorcerer, Cain attempts to be the first person to return from the island alive. Legend has it that magical powers are at rest on this island. It is inhabited by numerous beasts, enormous dragons, and magical items that were supposed to be buried long ago. As Cain, the player must solve several baffling scenarios whilst keeping his hide intact in his search for the ultimate magic ring.

Terrifying monsters inhabit the island of No Return

Gather magic rings to cast devastating spells

First-person view requires precise combat skills

- Enhanced polygon graphics of giant dragons and enemies in a completely 3D world.
- Real time atmospheric effects include time of day and weather FX.
- Collect multiple magic rings to build an arsenal of offensive and defensive spells.
- First-person perspective in an RPG adventure where your combat skills will rely more on magic than swordplay.

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TEEN
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